United Nations A/72/PV.1

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

1st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 12 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly

The President: I declare open the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: In accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Statement by the President

The President: I am addressing the General Assembly today for the first time as its President. I would like to say once again that this is a great honour for me. I have always believed strongly in the power of multilateralism, and in compromise over conflict. That belief will be tested from time to time during the seventy-second session, but ultimately I am confident that it will be reaffirmed. It is also a great honour for my country, Slovakia. We see it as a testament to our commitment to the values and principles of the United Nations.

I would like to thank my predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson. I feel lucky to be taking the helm of our ship from such an able captain, and I will do my best to maintain the high standards that he has set for the General Assembly's work.

I look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, throughout the seventy-second session. The General Assembly will play a vital role in making his vision for a better United Nations — and therefore a better world — a reality. I also look forward to being advised by all of the members. Consultations with Member States will be a standing priority for me and my Office.

The seventy-second session will be a year of firsts. We will negotiate the first intergovernmental compact on migration. We will receive the first report from the Secretary-General and convene the first high-level event based on the landmark resolutions on sustaining peace adopted last year. Soon many States will sign the first agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons and the first international compact on eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping.

But this will also be a year of follow-up, and that will arguably be even more important. Firsts bring photographers and celebrations. Follow-up often comes with challenges and complications. Over the coming year, we will have to maintain momentum in implementing and financing the Sustainable Development Goals, and we must work to ensure that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is integrated

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into national, regional and international frameworks. We must follow up on the commitments we made yesterday with actions today. We cannot let reports or events or resolutions of the past be relegated to the United Nations archives. We must continue to work to implement their recommendations.

Another major item for the seventy-second session is reform of the United Nations. In some ways, such reforms represent a first, and they will indeed mean something new; they will enable the United Nations to work in a way it never has before. However, they also represent follow-up. The United Nations today looks very different from the Organization that was established in 1945. It has been reforming and evolving over the years, and we have seen that through the process of revitalizing the General Assembly. We should therefore see United Nations reform as an opportunity to contribute to an ongoing process, but with a fresh outlook.

I have been reflecting carefully on my priorities as President of the Assembly at its seventy-second session. They have been greatly influenced by consultations with many of our members, and I will outline them in detail at the opening of the general debate next week. Now, however, I would like to speak briefly about a few principles that will guide my work over the coming year.

The first is people. Sometimes the work of the United Nations can be very complex, but the reason it was established is simple. The United Nations was created for people. Its job is to help people who are striving for peace and a decent life on a sustainable planet. The people who need the United Nations the most are not sitting in this Hall today. They are not involved in negotiating resolutions. They do not take the floor at high-level events. It is one of the tasks of the General Assembly to make sure that their voices can still be heard.

The second is balance. It would be impossible to choose only one priority for the United Nations to focus on this year. Opinions would differ from region to region, and indeed from person to person. Someone who has seen rising sea levels threaten to claim their village could say climate change. Someone who has lost a loved one in a bomb blast could say counter-terrorism. Someone who is suffering from persecution for their beliefs could say human rights. During the seventy-second session, I will work towards representing all these viewpoints. There must be balance in the work of the General Assembly.

The third principle is quality. This should be our objective, especially in terms of events. The majority of Member States do not have large representations in New York. Some of them — particularly smaller States — struggle to stay on top of the United Nations busy calendar. For the seventy-second session I intend to have a streamlined agenda, and to avoid placing more burdens on Member States. The quality of dialogue and outcomes is more important than launching new initiatives.

Finally, transparency is a principle I have been committed to throughout my career. I am sure all Members know where my office is on the second floor. My door will always be open to them, even if sometimes I have to close it physically, because I suspect there will be a lot of noise and activity among my team this year. It is open in spirit.

Let us not forget the significance of what we are doing here. Next week, 193 Member States will come together in the Hall. Even representatives of countries with profound disagreements on fundamental issues will sit side by side. We will not all agree. We are likely to hear different — sometimes conflicting — positions expressed from this podium, but I am confident that the overarching principles of the primacy of diplomacy, and mutual respect, will prevail. To help us meet this goal, I suggest one simple rule — to treat every speaker on this podium as if he or she is our own head of delegation. This will not only conserve the dignity of the general debate; it will also allow us to listen, learn and participate to the best possible extent.

We will face many challenges throughout the seventy-second session, but as long as we can all come together here, as long as we can all stand for equal time on this podium, and as long as we can use these meeting rooms to talk to each other and reach compromises in good will, then we all have the collective opportunity to use the United Nations to make the world a better, and more peaceful, place. If we do not do this, the failure will lie with us, not the United Nations.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: Let me begin by once again congratulating our new President of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák. He and I have had

good discussions in recent months about our shared hopes for this session. I have no doubt the Assembly is in very capable hands. His experience, his vision and his wisdom are recognized by all of us that have the privilege to know him. I also welcome President Lajčák's choice of theme for the year to come: "Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet." I look forward to working together for progress on all our areas of work.

Our world faces serious threats — from the proliferation of nuclear weapons to global terrorism, from climate change to inequality. We also face major challenges, from migration to the unintended consequences of technological advances, such as cyberattacks. People around the world are rightly demanding change and looking for Governments and institutions to deliver. We all agree that the United Nations must do even more to adapt and deliver. That is the aim of the reform proposals that this Assembly will consider. I look forward to working with the President and representatives to strengthen our Organization to better support the Member States and to produce better results for the people we serve.

One key change, within and beyond the United Nations, must be to empower the world's women and girls. Yesterday, I launched a road map for achieving gender parity throughout the United Nations, at all levels. I appeal to delegations to put forward women candidates for vacancies. Parity at the United Nations will improve performance at the United Nations.

Despite today's conflicts and the grinding daily impact of poverty, I remain convinced that this is far more an era of transformational potential. May the seventy-second session of the General Assembly take bold steps to seize those opportunities as we continue to serve "we the peoples".

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Item 141 of the provisional agenda

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/72/380)

The President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/72/380. It contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly, in which he informs the Assembly that four Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years".

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/72/380?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the seventy-second session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the seventy-second session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Cabo Verde, China, Dominica, Indonesia, Ireland, the Russian Federation, Uganda, Uruguay and the United States of America.

May I take it that the States that I have just mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Delegations are reminded that credentials should be submitted to the Office of Legal Affairs, as announced in *The Journal of the United Nations*.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Organization of work of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly

Letter from the Chair of the Committee on Conferences (A/72/376)

The President: The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/72/376, which contains a letter dated 5 September 2017 from the Chair of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly. Members are aware that, pursuant to section 1, paragraph 7, of Assembly resolution 40/243, of 18 December 1985, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during the main part of a regular session of the Assembly, unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

On the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services, authorization is thus sought for the following subsidiary organs: the Committee on Relations with the Host Country; the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund; the Independent Audit Advisory Committee; and the Assembly of State Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize those subsidiary organs of the Assembly to meet during the main part of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.2

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

2nd plenary meeting
Friday, 15 September 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 7

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

First report of the General Committee (A/72/250)

The President: I invite the General Assembly to direct its attention to section I of the report of the Committee. In this section, the General Committee takes note of the information contained in paragraph 2.

I now request the General Assembly to direct its attention to section II, entitled "Organization of the session", which contains a number of recommendations concerning the General Committee, rationalization of work, the closing date for the session, the schedule of meetings, the general debate, conduct of the meetings and so on.

With regard to paragraph 22, I understand that the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) will complete its work by Friday, 10 November 2017. May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendation that the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) complete its work by Friday, 10 November 2017?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 31, the General Committee draws the attention of the Assembly to the fact that the general debate will begin on Tuesday, 19 September, and recommends that it continue on Saturday, 23 September 2017.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the information contained in paragraph 31 and approves the recommendation that the general debate continue on Saturday, 23 September 2017?

It was so decided.

The President: All other recommendations in section II of the report of the Committee concern established practice, so rather than going through them one by one, I believe it would be beneficial to address as a whole all of the organizational matters concerning the General Assembly. There being no comments on that approach, we shall proceed accordingly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all of the information and to approve all the recommendations of the General Committee contained in section II of the report, taking into account the decision just taken regarding paragraph 22?

It was so decided.

The President: Having just adopted the recommendation in paragraph 27 on waiving the requirements of rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly to declare a meeting open, I should like to encourage delegations to be present in the meeting rooms at the scheduled time in order to promote punctuality and efficiency in the Assembly's proceedings. I should also like to draw delegations' attention to the information contained in paragraph

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63 on the timely submission of draft proposals for the review of their programme budget implications.

I now invite members to turn their attention to section III, dealing with the adoption of the agenda. The question of the allocation of items will be dealt with subsequently in section IV.

In section III, the General Committee took note of the information contained in paragraphs 81 to 83. In paragraph 84, in connection with sub-item (e) of item 17 of the draft agenda, entitled "Financial inclusion for sustainable development", and sub-item (f) of item 17 of the draft agenda, entitled "Promotion of international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows in order to foster sustainable development", the General Committee decided to recommend their inclusion under heading A, entitled "Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 85, in connection with sub-item (j) of item 19 of the draft agenda, entitled "Combating sand and dust storms", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading A.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 86, in connection with item 41 of the draft agenda, entitled "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading B, "Maintenance of international peace and security", on the understanding that there would be no consideration of the item by the General Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 87, in connection with sub-item (b) of item 52 of the draft agenda, entitled "Joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading B.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 88, in connection with item 63 of the draft agenda, entitled "Question of the Malagasy islands of Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassas da India", the General Committee decided to recommend that consideration of the item be deferred to the seventy-third session of the General Assembly and that the item be included in the provisional agenda of that session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 89, in connection with item 67 of the draft agenda, entitled "Complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova", the General Committee decided to postpone its consideration of the question of inclusion of the item to the next meeting of the General Committee, to be held in October.

In paragraph 90, in connection with item 83 of the draft agenda, entitled "Expulsion of aliens", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading F, "Promotion of justice and international law".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 91, in connection with sub-item (ii) of item 100 of the draft agenda, entitled "Nuclear disarmament verification", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading G, "Disarmament".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 92, in connection with item 133 of the draft agenda, entitled "Sexual exploitation and abuse: implementing a zero-tolerance policy", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 93, in connection with item 134 of the draft agenda, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity", the General Committee decided, by a recorded vote, to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

Before proceeding further, I should like to draw the attention of members to rule 23 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion. The President may limit the time to be allowed to speakers under this rule."

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic): In reference to the request for inclusion made by Australia and Ghana, my delegation would like to once again express its deep concern about the insistence of both permanent representatives on breaching the understanding that exists among Member States that we should continue to discuss the issue of the responsibility to protect in the framework of informal dialogue sessions.

I would like to make it clear to the Assembly that mine and many other respected delegations are not opposed to the concept of the responsibility to protect. Today, however, we are here to stand up for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to defend democratic and fair practices in the United Nations. Today, regrettably, we are dealing with undemocratic and non-transparent practices on the part of some Member States that could have serious consequences for the prospects of reaching an understanding in the Assembly on the concept, essence, pillars and regulations of the responsibility to protect.

Needless to say, the effort to bridge the differences between Member States is a response to legitimate concerns about the tendency of some Governments to misuse the notion of the responsibility to protect as a pretext for military aggression against other States or political intervention in their internal affairs. We are not talking about mere hypothetical or possible situations but rather about real tragedies and consequences that have occurred and continue to occur in many countries because military force is used under a pretext of humanitarian concern. We therefore do not accept the argument of some members that the responsibility to protect is a purely humane concept devoid of any political considerations.

I would like to draw delegations' attention to part of the Secretary-General's statement at the informal dialogue session on the responsibility to protect held on 6 September, in which he said that

> "[t]he responsibility to protect still generates some discomfort for a number of States, and the main concern is that the principle will be used to impose international approaches on national problems in ways that may harm national sovereignty."

Unfortunately, that fact, endorsed by the Secretary-General, was not reflected in his annual report (A/71/1016) or in the summary of the informal interactive dialogue session of 6 September, which once again confirms the concern of a considerable number of Member States that there is a tendency among some Member States to act in an undemocratic and non-transparent way in order to impose their position on this issue and ignore the substantive concerns of many Member States.

In conclusion, and based on what I have just pointed out, my delegation calls for a vote on the request for the item's inclusion on the agenda and urges all delegations to act responsibly so as to give the informal interactive dialogue a chance to bridge the gaps and reach consensus on the concept, essence and regulation of the responsibility to protect.

Mrs. Pobee (Ghana): At the outset, let me warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We commend you for the able manner in which you have already begun to conduct the affairs of the Assembly, and I would like to assure you of our full support.

My delegation, like many others, shares the view that Member States must take urgent steps to improve the prevention of atrocities and affirm the importance of the principle of the responsibility to protect in such efforts. Ghana is of the view that the principle of the responsibility to protect remains relevant both as an expression of political commitment and as a

blueprint for action to prevent and end genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Time and again we have reiterated our support for the framework for implementing the responsibility to protect based on the principle's three equal and mutually reinforcing pillars.

However, we acknowledge that some concerns have been raised about the concept and that we are not all on the same page, which is precisely why Ghana and Australia have requested the inclusion of an item on it on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session, so that we can exchange views on the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We are aware of those differences and concerns, but rather than letting them prevent us from deliberating on and confronting the challenges surrounding the concept, we see them as justification for dialogue in a format that allows our views to be recorded and taken on board. We strongly believe that sincere, transparent and constructive dialogue will help us find further common ground.

The General Assembly occupies a central position in the United Nations as its main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ. It provides a unique forum not only for the discussion of international issues but also for the processes of standard-setting and codifying international law. The request for the inclusion of such an agenda item by Australia and Ghana, in accordance with rule 14 of the rules of procedure, is in the very spirit and essence of our Organization. In seeking a one-time opportunity for a formal thematic debate in this session on the responsibility to protect, it is not our intention to have a draft resolution adopted but to achieve the more important aims of fostering dialogue, helping to build a consensus on the issue and finding further common ground on how best to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

In that regard, we wish to recall that the first report on this issue (A/63/677), entitled "Implementing the responsibility to protect", was presented by the then Secretary-General in 2009 and was considered later that year in the General Assembly's first and so far only debate on the subject. In resolution 63/308, the General Assembly took note of the Secretary-General's report and the debate on it and decided to continue its consideration of the responsibility to protect. Eight years have now passed since the General Assembly formally considered the responsibility to protect on its agenda. While we acknowledge that the annual informal interactive dialogue on the responsibility to protect has an important role to play, we consider it important to ensure that the General Assembly fulfils the role foreseen for it in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and subsequent resolutions. Now is a timely opportunity to do so.

The Secretary-General's 2017 report on the responsibility to protect (A/71/1016), which makes it clear that the principle is a key component of his preventive agenda, underlines the need for a continuous, frank and inclusive dialogue on the issue. His far-reaching recommendations include calling on Member States to consider including a specific item on prevention and the responsibility to protect on the General Assembly's formal agenda. Both the report and the interactive dialogue held on 6 September have reaffirmed the wide agreement on the need for the General Assembly to move beyond an informal interactive exchange of views on a matter of such importance. In view of all of this, we strongly encourage Member States to vote for the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Assembly at this session.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): As this is the first time I am speaking during your able presidency, Sir, I would like to congratulate you, as the representative of Ghana just did, on your election, and to assure you of my delegation's full support to you in your work in the coming year.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly supports the General Committee's recommendation that the responsibility to protect be included in the formal agenda of the General Assembly. With that, we, as an international community, will be able to facilitate a frank and inclusive dialogue. Exchanging views and experiences will help us to build common ground, an important step towards the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The gap between our stated commitment to the responsibility to protect and the daily reality for people confronted with mass atrocity crimes must be closed. To do that, we should use all of the tools at our disposal to provide early warning. We believe that discussing the responsibility to protect in the General Assembly will be a significant step forward.

As Ghana's statement indicates, we understand that differences of opinion exist on the concept of responsibility to protect and its implementation. But let us discuss those differences here in the Assembly,

because that is why it exists, to enable us to have open and frank dialogue.

We think that the recommendation of the General Committee should be approved, and we call on all Member States present here today to join us in our support for including this item on the agenda and having a substantive discussion here in the General Assembly.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to reiterate our support for the statement by the representative of Syria. Our country is opposed to seeing the topic of the responsibility to protect included on the Assembly's agenda at its seventy-second session, and we will provide our reasons for that decision in our explanation of vote before the voting. We believe that this issue, which has generated serious discussion and goes against the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly those relating to the sovereignty of States, should enjoy consensus on the part of all members and should not be imposed by way of a vote.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Needless to say, Mr. President, we are delighted to be able to join previous speakers in congratulating you and wishing you every success in your work.

My delegation has consistently advocated for strengthening States' capacity to protect their peoples from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We participated actively in preparing the elements of the concept of the responsibility to protect that were included the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. Even at the time it was extremely difficult to reach a consensus on them, and since then the major contradictions around the concept have only deepened, while some well-known instances of its application in practice have had disastrous consequences. In the light of that, including a new item on the responsibility to protect on the General Assembly's agenda is premature and a mistake. Moving on to the next stage, raising the status of the discussions and formalizing the process can only result in further hardening States' positions. Many delegations expressed disagreement with the proposal to include the topic on the Assembly's agenda, culminating in a vote in the General Committee on 13 September. The result is that the fragile consensus on the concept's elements continues to fray.

It is no coincidence that in 2009 delegations chose the format of the informal interactive dialogue to discuss this topic, for reasons that include the fact that the concept was not fully formulated, that a number of States did not agree with its broad interpretation and that there were serious disagreements about its implementation. These factors were evident during the recent discussion of the latest report on the subject (A/71/1016), which contained some very controversial and far-reaching opinions and approaches. In the circumstances, we believe that the current format for considering the topic is perfectly adequate to meeting the mandate in resolution 63/308, and we see no reason to change or duplicate it. My delegation will vote against the inclusion of the item on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and we urge others to do the same.

Ms. Bird (Australia): The Charter of the United Nations tells us that one of the purposes of the Organization is to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of a humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. The drafters who wrote those words had fresh in their minds the horrors of the Second World War and the genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity that had been committed under the cloak of war. Uniting nations to stand together against such crimes was in many ways the raison d'être of this Organization. A generation ago, in the wake of the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica, we realized that the United Nations had not fulfilled that promise, and we recommitted to trying to do better.

In the face of the egregious crimes being committed today in places such as Syria, we have once again come together to affirm that we must do more to prevent and address those crimes, and that we must do it differently. In particular, since Secretary-General Guterres took office, the idea of prevention has become our new clarion call. He has made it clear that the responsibility to protect is a key element of his prevention agenda and has recommended that the General Assembly hold a debate on prevention and the responsibility to protect. In partnering with Ghana to request that this item be included on the Assembly's agenda, we are responding to that recommendation. We are also responding to the repeated calls for a debate on the subject in the Assembly from States with outstanding concerns about the responsibility to protect — States that have said that

it is the General Assembly, not the Security Council or the Human Rights Council, that should be leading the way on the responsibility to protect.

In bringing forward that request, our one and only goal has been to foster dialogue and help build a consensus on what the United Nations and Member States should do to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We understand that certain Member States' views on the responsibility to protect differ from ours. Resolving differences in views through debate and consensus-building, however, is precisely the reason we come together in this Hall. Indeed, we had hoped that holding an open, transparent and inclusive debate was something that we could all agree on, given that it will enable all Member States to put their views on the record. A debate is purely and simply an opportunity to share experiences and views, and to learn by listening to one another.

We worked hard to try to reach a consensus. At every step, we have listened and tried to accommodate people's concerns, and we are grateful to the many delegations that took the time to meet with us at this busy time of year. Together with Ghana, the Australian delegation has expressly stated — in writing and in person — that we will not put forward a draft resolution as an outcome to the debate. We have made it clear that the proposal before the Assembly concerns a debate in the seventy-second session only. We have underlined that what is proposed is a thematic debate, not the consideration of specific countries' situations.

Twelve years ago, Heads of State and Government agreed unanimously that the General Assembly should continue its consideration of the responsibility to protect. It has now been eight years since the Assembly's one and only debate on the subject. Our actions are not hasty. Indeed, in our view, bringing the membership together to debate something that is fundamental to the very purpose of the United Nations is well overdue. Australia is disappointed that a small number of States are not willing to have a conversation about the responsibility to protect and prevention. We are disappointed that the General Committee's recommendation that the item be included on the agenda is being challenged.

Today's vote says nothing about paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome document. That is merely a procedural matter resulting from certain States' unwillingness to have a dialogue on prevention. Australia urges all Member States to vote to confirm the General Committee's recommendation that the item on the responsibility to protect and prevention be included on the Assembly's agenda. Every vote in favour will demonstrate our commitment to working together to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider the question of the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the Assembly at its current session. Before giving the floor to those members wishing to speak in explanation of vote before the voting, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The EU and its member States support including the responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the General Assembly. In the face of an alarming trend in the increasing number of deliberate attacks on civilians, we must close the gap between rhetoric and actions. We must better harness the preventive potential of the concept of the responsibility to protect. A good way to do that is by formalizing our dialogue on the subject in the General Assembly. There is much that we all agree on, and only by deliberating on it and discussing it can we move to appropriate action. For that reason the EU member States will vote in favour of keeping the item on the responsibility to protect on the Assembly's provisional agenda, as recommended by the General Committee.

Mrs. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor in this session, we would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and affirm our support to you in performing your duties.

The delegation of Cuba is grateful to the Secretary-General for his efforts in preparing the most recent report on the responsibility to protect (A/71/1016) and for the interactive dialogues that have already been held on the subject with Member States. Cuba would like to recall that the issue of the responsibility to protect has continued to lead to a number of serious concerns for a number of countries, particularly small and developing States, because of the lack of consensus and guidelines on the various elements of the topic, which can easily be manipulated for political purposes.

In that regard, we would like to emphasize that such manipulation and politicization have been apparent not only in some recent tragic cases where the responsibility to protect has been implemented, but also in the outcomes of our discussions in the latest informal interactive dialogue in the United Nations. To mention only two examples, I would point to the partiality of the panelists selected and, above all, the lack of transparency in the most recent report summarizing the informal interactive dialogue held on 6 September, which ignored the position of a number of States that clearly expressed their concerns about and disagreement with the intended implementation of the responsibility to protect, based on the lack of an international consensus on the concept.

With this in mind, Cuba believes that now is not the time for the General Assembly to enter into a frank and transparent dialogue on the responsibility to protect. Our prestigious representative organ should not dive prematurely into a debate that would serve only to exacerbate existing differences within the Organization, given that we do not yet have a consensus on what the scope and implications of the topics should be. Such a consensus will be vital to resolving our differences in interpreting the responsibility to protect in order to guarantee its recognition and universal acceptance and to legitimize the proposed actions for implementing it. That is the only way to ensure that some States do not selectively manipulate the concept, as they have already been doing, in order to facilitate interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign States and promote agendas for regime change and acts of subversion against certain countries — most of them small and developing countries — that would be in violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): Like the rest of my colleagues, I too would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, and wishing you success as you take on the task of presiding over our deliberations.

I am taking the floor today to explain our vote on the General Committee's recommendation that the Assembly include on its agenda for the seventy-second session an item entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity".

In its past few sessions, the General Assembly has focused on revitalizing its work in carrying out its role as a deliberative and norm-setting organ, as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations. Today, very early in this seventy-second session, we are faced with the option of deciding whether we are ready to move forward in that process. We are called on to decide whether we should discuss and deliberate on an issue that has enormous relevance for our work and indeed for our times. State sovereignty is a well-established principle of international law. It has been the bedrock underpinning inter-State relations for several centuries now. However, developments have also shown that concerns are growing that the cardinal principle of State sovereignty has not always been able to prevent atrocity crimes.

Like many other countries, India recognizes the importance of finding appropriate ways to address such legally complex and politically challenging issues. It is evident that we need to reflect on the gaps in our understanding of the concepts behind the responsibility to protect and ensure that the quest for a more just global order is conducted in a way that does not undermine international order itself. Such thematic consideration requires open, inclusive and transparent discussions and must address a host of unresolved legal and politically sensitive principles on which there is clearly no consensus.

India has consistently held the position that protecting its population is one of the foremost responsibilities of every State. The right to life is a right from which no derogation is permitted. While reflecting the will of the people, States also exist to protect the rights of the people. We have noted the affirmation by the sponsors of the proposal that their aim is only to have a debate at the seventy-second session. The objective that they have articulated is to hold a thematic debate rather than one addressing country-specific situations. They have also indicated that they are not seeking the adoption of any resolution. That is in line with our own understanding that the gravity of the normative concepts at stake requires careful deliberation rather than pre-emptive decision-making. It is with this understanding that my delegation will vote in favour of the recommendation of the General Committee to include this item on the agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Remaoun (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): This is my first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, Sir, and I congratulate you on your election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-second

session. My delegation would like to assure you of its full support.

(*spoke in English*)

With regard to the matter under consideration, we would first like to thank Ghana and Australia for their proposal. We also thank the General Committee for considering it. In my explanation of vote before the voting, I will refrain from delving into the substance of the concept of responsibility to protect or elaborating on the negative consequences that we have already seen since it was first implemented, some years ago.

We are all aware that the question of responsibility to protect is a highly divisive one that does not enjoy any kind of consensus. The issue continues to raise serious doubts among many countries, particularly developing countries, owing to a lack of consensus and of definitions for many elements of the concept. I should emphasize that the concept is fundamentally a legal one and that any new international legal concept that does not enjoy consensus will automatically lack legitimacy and be seen as politicized.

We all know that the United Nations already has a forum that is dedicated to dealing with legal issues — the Sixth Committee, which is the primary forum for the consideration of legal questions in the General Assembly. It has an express mandate to promote the progressive development of international law. We also all know that the practice in the Sixth Committee is never to vote on legal questions to be added to its agenda or on those that are already under consideration on their way forward. Last year, for instance, the agenda item on the responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts, addressed in the Sixth Committee, received the support of an overwhelming majority for organizing a diplomatic conference, based on International Law Commission articles, to negotiate a new treaty on States' responsibility.

The Group of African States, the Group of Arab States, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and many delegations from the Group of Asia-Pacific States and the Group of Western European and other States supported moving forward with this idea. However, given the reservations expressed by about 10 delegations, all of us in the Sixth Committee decided to continue discussions on the matter in subsequent sessions, owing to the lack of consensus.

Now, in the case of the responsibility to protect, we already have an annual informal debate that constitutes a good forum where States can exchange views and interact on the subject. My delegation therefore does not see any added value in including it on the agenda of the General Assembly; indeed, it would be irrelevant to include it as an item to be discussed in plenary of the Assembly. For that reason, my delegation is not in favour of including the responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity as a supplementary item on the agenda of the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before explaining our vote, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you formally on your election to lead the Assembly for this session. I know that we already congratulated you earlier, but I would like to reiterate it here in plenary. You can count on our full support.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will vote against the inclusion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session because in our view it continues to provoke serious disputes, controversies and concerns among Member States that should be taken into account when we are talking about an item as important this one. Definitions of the principle's concept and scope are seriously lacking, creating a serious risk of undermining the sovereignty of States as one of the guiding principles of international relations. We also believe that its ambiguity can lead to confused or self-interested interpretations, as we have seen occur in policies with double standards in this very Organization, to the detriment of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs, the prevention of threats and the use of force, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Today's vote makes it impossible for us to achieve a consensus on the concept of the responsibility to protect. Our reservations are based on the realities of the traumatic experience of armed intervention and military aggression that have been perpetrated in the past few years against various peoples and countries in efforts to overthrow their Governments, resulting in the destabilization of whole regions and the dismantling of State institutions. Several of those have already been mentioned today, of which I would single out the dire situations in Iraq, Libya and Syria.

I would like to reiterate that Venezuela is firmly committed to the necessity of preventing crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing, and we have always condemned and denounced such grave crimes and will continue to do so in this Organization. However, we have always been in favour of dealing with such situations through open and transparent discussion in the informal dialogue format. In our view, raising its status to that of formal debate, besides being premature, could make it possible for an issue of this importance, based on a founding principle of the Charter, to become a tool for aggression against individual countries. While I do not believe that would happen in this session, it could happen in future once the door has been opened.

We believe that the prevention of the crimes cited in the Rome Statute should be based on the importance of promoting a dialogue on the peaceful settlement of conflicts, always keeping in mind Chapter VI of the Charter, and not on military aggression, with its disastrous consequences for the peoples whose rights were supposed to be defended. This is a matter of effectively implementing the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

We are also seeing a dangerous trend in overlap between the purviews and responsibilities of the various bodies of the Organization. For example, the Security Council is now considering some questions previously outside its remit and is now attempting to equate the responsibility to protect with the principle of State sovereignty as outlined in the Charter and thereby interpreting the Charter to suit itself. My country believes that the responsibility to protect its citizens, including promoting and respecting their human rights, belongs to the State, based on its sovereignty and political independence. If any State deviates from that purpose of the Charter, there is a mechanism envisaged in Chapter VI to enable the United Nations to take action to protect the people.

Venezuela believes that there continue to be profound differences within the Organization as to the scope of the concept of the responsibility to protect, which is why we are of the view that it would be premature to put it on the Assembly's agenda at its seventy-second session. If it is included, we are prepared to discuss it, but we want to issue a warning about the possible dangers and consequences of discussing a topic as important as this that cannot count on having a consensus in the Organization. We are part of a number of countries that have severe objections to this principle and concept, and we hope that they will be taken into account in a discussion that should be entirely transparent and based on a consensus on the part of all our members.

Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe): Zimbabwe would like to reiterate its congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to this very important post. We have met previously in other circumstances, but I felt I should express it here too. We would like to assure you of our full support during your term of office.

We are grateful for the opportunity to articulate our concerns about including the item on the responsibility to protect, as it enables Member States to continue exchanging ideas on the modalities for applying this important principle. The United Nations needs to seek the broadest possible conceptual, political and operational consensus on the responsibility to protect in order to gather support from all Member States on its implementation.

At the moment, that broad consensus continues to be elusive, since differences in the interpretation of the World Summit Outcome document have increased more than could ever have been imagined back in 2005. The World Summit did not articulate any precise modalities for implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect, leading to further negotiations and consultations with regard to the Charter. We still have a long way to go to agree on a way forward. We would like to stress that the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is the primary responsibility of individual Member States, and should not be a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of States by some members of the international community.

The third pillar emphasizes the international community's responsibility for ensuring the use of the peaceful settlement of disputes and regional arrangements to assist in protecting the citizens of an individual Member State from such crimes. There can be no justification for an interventionist approach that subverts the primary responsibility of Member States for protecting their peoples from atrocity crimes. That is the fundamental understanding for many Member States of the spirit of the World Summit of 2005. They have continued to raise concerns about this premature elevation of the responsibility to protect from concept

to concrete action and therefore need to be assured of its objective, just and transparent application.

While there is already strong scepticism on this issue in the wake of various attempts to use the responsibility to protect as a tool for furthering the interests of some members of the Security Council by interfering in the internal affairs of other Member States, considerable ambiguity still exists about the terms and conditions under which coercive military intervention is legitimate. The evidence shows that decisions to intervene militarily are based on self-interest, without which the political commitment needed to sustain such an operation cannot exist. The massive scale of destruction and the cost of reconstruction are eloquent evidence of how military intervention can make an averted atrocity crime unimaginably worse.

We would like to stress that if preventive and protective intervention is to become a global policy, an appropriate international legal framework will be needed to reduce the propensity to use brute military force against Member States in the name of the responsibility to protect. The more that the notion of the responsibility to protect is used as a basis for military intervention, the more likely it is to be discredited. The use of military force must always be a last resort, not the primary or only means of intervention. And when the entry and exit points for any military intervention are not clearly defined, that can lead to unintended extended mandates.

The current application of the responsibility to protect is highly interventionist rather than focused on ending hostilities through diplomacy, mediation and other tools of capacity-building, which suggests that we must adhere to a universal model of State sovereignty if we are to preclude international intervention. We support the call for more dialogue on the responsibility to protect and reiterate the need for open, sincere and transparent dialogue aimed at bridging the existing conceptual gaps among Member States before we can move forward. We also support the view that Member States are already conducting regular risk assessments on atrocity crimes and taking the necessary mitigation measures with or without multilateral assistance through the Universal Periodic Review in the Human Rights Council. Such initiatives can be strengthened further to obviate some of the political and legal gaps in the selective process of implementing the responsibility to protect, which is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that there we still need more dialogue and consultations on the precise modalities and framework under which the responsibility to protect is shared between Member States and the international community as a whole. Member States have persistently called for further dialogue on the matter, in order to garner broad consensus on the concept and principle of the responsibility to protect, before the United Nations can move from principle to practice on preventing atrocities. Accordingly, Zimbabwe will vote against the inclusion of this item on the agenda.

Mr. Nasimfar (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your election to guide the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish you success in all of your endeavours.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and is fully commited to its obligation under the Convention to prevent genocide and punish all perpetrators of such heinous acts. We also strongly condemn any atrocity crimes, such as crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes of aggression and ethnic cleansing. Moreover, we are adamant on the necessity to protect populations from the risk of atrocity crimes. Needless to say, we believe that every State should embrace that responsibility with regard to its citizens. That should certainly never imply that it should be allowed to use force against another State under such pretexts as humanitarian intervention.

We shall vote against including the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, not because we are opposed to the intrinsic purpose of the concept, but rather to draw the attention of Member States to its biased interpretation and application, which is a trend that could ultimately undermine the legitimacy of the United Nations. The responsibility to protect may come to be considered a noble and valuable initiative if it can become a balanced, unbiased and non-politicized set of principles applicable to all. However, the actions and inactions of proponents of the responsibility to protect in the past have not been consistent with the alleged objectives and purposes of such initiatives.

It would seem in theory that protecting a population should be at the centre of the responsibility to protect, but in practice we have seen that it is guided by the

politicized interests of States rather than by concerns about human dignity and human rights. That is why the current legal gaps in the concept of the responsibility to protect, along with its selective application, have called into question its legitimacy and applicability as a principle of international law. One thing is obvious, which is that favoured States have always been granted impunity and had their atrocities overlooked, however serious they are. It also seems that the idea of the responsibility to protect is gradually being developed not as a means to address every dire situation, but as a concept or political tool for paving the way for interventionist policies whenever they are needed and in a selective manner, in clear contradiction of the Charter of the United Nations. That is the real challenge for the responsibility to protect. Selectivity, double standards and politicization make it prone to manipulation and abuse.

We will vote against the proposal so as to emphasize the existing shortcomings and challenges of the responsibility to protect. We want to send its proponents the message that its abuse on political grounds has already reduced it to the level of a tool at the service of certain Powers and has increased the doubts about its future applicability and success. We also believe that the only way to restore the responsibility to protect and its legitimacy is to do away with its selectivity and to define the concept and its scope of application in a way that genuinely addresses the plight of humankind whenever it faces atrocity crimes, in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter. Addressing the misery of people under occupation is the foremost test of the responsibility to protect.

We are ready to enter into meaningful dialogue with the proponents of the initiative, in an organized and transparent manner, in order to define the normative content, objectives and scope of application of the responsibility to protect. We maintain that such a discussion should be legal rather political, and that therefore, after its inclusion on the General Assembly's agenda, it should be transferred to the Sixth Committee so that Member States can reach a consensus on their understanding of the notion before talking about its implementation.

Mr. Varankov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We have complied with all the protocol formalities. The delegation of Belarus regrets the recommendation of the General Committee to include this item on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and we will vote against it.

The most contention and inconsistent part of the concept is its third component, which allows for foreign interference. By restricting the immutable principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the non-use of force or threat of its use, which are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the implementation of the concept in the format currently suggested by its proponents is a mistaken interpretation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which undermines the initial consensus nature of the concept and provides individual States with an additional tool to put political and military pressure on other countries.

This is why, before we move on to formal consideration of such an important global agenda item, we should determine the scope of the principle and agree on a clearly balanced mechanism for the practical application of foreign interference. Such a possibility should arise only in the most extreme situations and only with the sanction of the Security Council, in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations. We are firmly opposed to a manipulative approach to presenting the outcomes of discussions on the concept and to using the tools at the disposal of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which has lost the trust placed in it, having become the most biased and politicized body of the United Nations system. We also urge other countries to vote against the inclusion of this item on the agenda.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I join others in congratulating you, Mr. President. I look forward to you bringing Slovak wisdom to our debates.

The United Kingdom continues to support the principle of the responsibility to protect, and we would welcome the inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the Assembly. The responsibility to protect is clearly within the scope of the Charter of the United Nations and, as set out in Article 10 of the Charter, it falls within the remit of the General Assembly to discuss. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, members stressed the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect.

I have listened carefully to the arguments of those opposing this agenda item and I want to say that I respect those arguments and those who make them. They are important arguments and they deserve to be

properly discussed. If we, as an Assembly, discuss only what we all agree on, then we will be able to save a lot of time and money and finish our deliberations in about a fortnight. We therefore believe that the time has come to discuss the responsibility to protect in the more formal setting of the General Assembly. We encourage Member States to support such discussion and respectful, important debates, irrespective of their substantive views on the responsibility to protect.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan): I would like to seize the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly for this session. As this is the first time that I am addressing you, Sir, I wish you all the best in the work of the General Assembly on its different agenda items.

Having said that, we concretely believe that the responsibilty to protect should not be used as a political tool to achieve narrow interests, as it has clearly become, or to trade in the suffering of civilians. It is quite notable that there is no consensus on the concept — it is not a principle — of the responsibility to protect. There are still lingering concerns regarding its definition, scope and implementation. Therefore, in our humble opinion, more discretion, research and analysis of its ingredients, pillars, causes and consequences are needed. It is totally premature now to assign the concept to the agenda of the General Assembly. We need to answer these questions: do we have a real, unequivocal legal reference for the responsibility to protect? What is the limitation on the consent given by world leaders at the 2005 World Summit? Is it a direct mandate to apply the responsibility to protect? How can we be assured that it will not be politically exploited?

We are a developing country, like so many countries in the Hall. We are a developing country in Africa. We are very concerned about the selective application, which is unfortunately inevitable, of the responsibility to protect outside the legitimacy of the Charter of the United Nations, especially outside the power of the Security Council under Chapter VII when it acts on behalf of all the membership of the United Nations in maintaining peace and security worldwide and suppressing serious violations of human rights, including those against civilians.

In the early 1980s, as we said last year before the Security Council, a member of the Council expressed, together with other members, a rejection of the responsibilty to protect as a dubious concept that takes the guise of the protection against atrocities but which is in fact aimed at enhancing individual interest. We believe that this argument is still valid, and that is why we are calling for a discussion and the non-imposition of this non-consensual concept and non-consensual agreement in the Hall by the General Assembly or one of its main Committees.

The responsibility to protect amounts to amending the Charter in an unfortunate way, with devastating consequences for the future of security and peace in the world. We are saying this based solely on the experience of the international community in recent decades. That is why we are strongly calling for restraint in this regard. Therefore, we are going to vote against this and, for the sake of dialogue and multilateralism, we ask all members in the Hall to do the same.

Mr. Warraich (Pakistan): At the outset, let me join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the office of the President of the General Assembly.

The notion of the responsibility to protect is highly divisive. The selective and biased application of this notion has further eroded global confidence and support to it. We believe that, in this setting, a one-off General Assembly debate will have little if any utility in furthering our common understanding of and consensus over the issue. It will only accentuate existing differences, not help bridge them.

It is for this reason that my delegation will vote against the inclusion of this item in the agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Simonoff (United States of America): The United States supports the inclusion of the responsibility to protect in the agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. In general, the General Assembly has taken a permissive approach to the inclusion of items in the agenda. We note that there are many agenda items on the agenda of this body where there is no consensus on the substance of the item. But lack of consensus on the substance does not prevent the General Assembly from debating the item.

We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly debate the issue of the prevention of atrocities, and we welcome Australia's and Ghana's initiative to propose the inclusion of this item in the agenda. A transparent debate in this Hall where differences of views can be thoroughly aired would be

healthy for this body. We encourage all Member States to vote in favour of including this important item in the General Assembly's agenda.

Mr. Tito (Kiribati): I am very new here — only two days old — as the Permanent Representative of my country. I thank the Secretary-General for accepting my credentials just two days ago.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Kiribati, one of the most peaceful spots on the planet, I would like to see the item under discussion included in the agenda of the seventy-second session so that we have time to discuss it. I feel that we are killing it — a beautiful child that has to be born — here, by preventing it from being born. It needs to be born so that we can discuss it later on and decide what we are going to do with it.

I speak in my capacity as former President of Kiribati and as one who was also instrumental in introducing the concept to the Pacific region, when the Pacific region met in my country in the millennium year 2000. At that time, we agreed to have the concept introduced into the Pacific region in the form of the Biketawa Declaration. You must have seen it in the documents, Mr. President.

The Biketawa Declaration grants to the Pacific Islands Forum, which represents the 16 member countries of the Pacific region, the right to protect and intervene in the sovereignty of countries when they have serious security problems. In this regard, I am pleased to say that Australia did very well when it put the Biketawa Declaration into action in the Solomon Islands, where we all helped. Policemen from different islands went there to provide assistance, and the Solomon Islands were very grateful for that, as far as I understand.

I therefore see the concept already working in the Pacific starting in the year 2000 and I do not see why it would not work for the world as a whole, where I see so many people wanting protection, children suffering — some 30 million in the Arab world, I heard in the UNICEF meeting. Some 360 million people worldwide are suffering from armed conflicts. What are we doing about it? We should discuss it. I am not say that we have the solution now, but I believe that this is the way forward.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over the great debate we are having today. A visitor from outside looking down and listening to us in the past hour would assume that we had already approved the recommendation to have a debate here in the General Assembly on the issue of responsibility to protect.

I have heard colleagues say that we need more discussion and that there is no consensus. I think the discussion we have had in the past 45 minutes proves their point. We do need more discussion. Let us approve the recommendation and let us have this very valid and very valuable discussion between those in this Assembly who agree and those who do not agree on the substance. That is what we are here for, and I therefore hope that the recommendation will be approved.

Mr. Ri Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

The responsibility to protect people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity is within each country's sovereignty. As has been stated by many representatives today, the responsibility-to-protect concept has many aspects that violate the Charter of the United Nations, which guarantees the sovereignty of the State from illegal external political interventions and armed invasions. The responsibility-to-protect concept has to date been abused in the form of illegal aggression, illegal interference and the overthrow of Governments of small developing countries.

There are many different views among States Members of the United Nations on the controversial responsibility-to-protect concept. The military invasions of Iraq, Libya and Syria, under the pretext of protecting civilians, have shown the real purpose of the responsibility-to-protect concept, which has been hastily implemented without the consensus of the international community.

We should therefore continue to discuss the concept informally until we reach consensus on the concept's principles and scope. Accordingly, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will vote against the proposed inclusion for formal discussion of the responsibility-to-protect concept in the agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

Ms. Moldoisaeva (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the delegation of Kyrgyzstan, allow me

to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

The principle of the responsibility to protect is not universally recognized. It is not unambiguously supported by all the States Members of the United Nations. It is a concept rather than an international norm or standard. In this respect, we underscore the fact that the violation of a State's sovereignty and interference in its internal affairs for humanitarian and other reasons without the consent of the Government is simply unacceptable.

Basing ourselves on that, the Kyrgyz Republic will vote against the inclusion of the principle of the responsibility to protect in the official agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on the question of the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of the item entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity".

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen

Against:

Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Chad, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Colombia, Gabon, Jordan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Mali, Serbia, Togo, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam

The General Assembly approved the recommendation by 113 votes to 21, with 17 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegation of Kiribati informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt): At the outset, allow me to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly.

My delegation takes the floor in explanation of vote after the voting. We regret that the matter of including an agenda item entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" on the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session has come to such a conclusion. We note that the voting in and of itself dispels any misconceptions or illusions that there is consensus on the notion of responsibility to protect or on how to move forward in that regard. We would like to affirm Egypt's steadfast and unwavering commitment to the noble goal of the protection of civilians.

Disturbed by increasing attacks on health-care workers and facilities and growing impediments to the delivery of health care in a wide range of contemporary conflicts, Egypt and four other sponsors and penholders drafted and successfully adopted Security Council resolution 2286 (2016) on the protection of health care in armed conflict during our presidency of the Security Council last year. The resolution sent a strong message from the Council that attacks targeting hospitals and medical workers were unacceptable and would not be tolerated. It also urged States to ensure accountability regarding the perpetration of crimes targeting health-care facilities or health-care personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties.

Nevertheless, we believe that the notion of the responsibility to protect still contains a number of political and legal gaps that, if left unattended, would do more harm than good with regard to universal acceptance. Such gaps must first be addressed, and a consensus reached on the conceptual framework of the notion, before any further steps are taken to mainstream the notion of the responsibility to protect across the United Nations system.

Moving forward, we ask those who put forward the proposal to abide by their promise that the decision to include the agenda item will be applied only to the seventy-second session of the General Assembly and that no resolutions will be brought forth following the General Assembly's consideration of the item.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I wish to make an explanation of vote after the voting on the inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly its seventy-second session an item on the responsibility to protect, the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Singapore voted to support the inclusion of the agenda item. As a member of the Group of Friends on the Responsibility to Protect, Singapore has always supported the right of delegations to discuss the issue in the General Assembly. Singapore would have preferred that the issue be resolved by consensus. Unfortunately, consensus was not possible in this instance.

Deep differences remain among Member States on the concept of the responsibility to protect, and we are aware that the issue continues to divide many Member States. In that regard, we welcome the assurance given by the Permanent Representatives of Australia and Ghana that today's decision concerns the inclusion of the proposed item in the agenda of the seventy-second session only. We also welcome the clear and categorical assurance that they will not bring forward any draft resolution under the agenda item and that their intention is to foster a dialogue.

In our view, the General Assembly is indeed the forum for an inclusive and open-ended dialogue among all Member States, including on difficult issues. However, we underline the need for a dialogue on this difficult issue, to be based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. That dialogue must also be conducted on the basis of mutual respect and understanding and with sensitivity to the different views of Member States. We should all be careful to avoid using a discussion on the agenda item to further deepen divisions and differences among Member States. In particular, we should avoid going in the direction of country-specific resolutions, as such an approach will not help to build confidence or help to build consensus.

Finally, we note and acknowledge that, in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, all our leaders stressed the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect. In that context, we are hopeful that an open-ended debate on the issue in the General Assembly will contribute to Member States finding more common ground on how the international community can better prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Like other delegations, I wish you all the best, Mr. President, in assuming your very important post, and you can rest assured of our support. I would also like to welcome our colleague and brother from the Pacific, the Ambassador of Kiribati, to the General Assembly.

Since the 2005 World Summit, 12 years ago, when world leaders first considered the subject of the responsibility to protect, it has been recognized as a complex and intricate issue, with no agreement on its definition or implementation. For Indonesia, our Constitution mandates the Government and people to promote and protect the human rights of everyone as a priority. At the same time, the principle of upholding humanity remains one of Indonesia's long-standing norms and values. It remains the conviction of the Republic of Indonesia that civilians must be protected

from crimes against humanity and atrocities that are committed in various parts of the world.

Noting the sensitivity of the third pillar, Indonesia remains of the view that promoting the principle of the responsibility to protect, particularly the aspects of prevention, capacity-building and assistance, are key in gaining greater acceptance from Member States on the concept of the responsibility to protect through a transparent and open discussion. It is important to ensure that the first pillar, on State responsibility, and the second pillar, on international community assistance, take precedent. What is most important is to strengthen the role of prevention throughout the discussion.

In that context, Indonesia believes that the inclusion of an item on the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly would be an opportunity for Member States to enrich their knowledge on how States' primary responsibility should be strengthened, by intensifying the exchange of views and learning from the experience of others, to avoid atrocities, genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

We also believe that our discourse on the concept of the responsibility to protect should not and must not in any way be used to downgrade the sovereignty of any country. Any intention to politicize such a dialogue in the future would certainly impede our efforts to increase our understanding of that important concept and would go against the genuine and noble efforts of the international community to prevent the occurrence of atrocities, genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity. Indonesia believes, as is stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, that we must always respect the sovereignty of States. While acknowledging the sovereignty of Member States, as well as their primary responsibility to protect their own peoples, the inclusion of the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the General Assembly without any expected outcome, as proposed by one of the sponsors, should not lead to the naming and shaming of any particular countries or regions but should ensure greater understanding. For that reason, Indonesia voted in favour of including the item on the agenda of the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Mr. Luque Márquez (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of your duties, and to assure you of Ecuador's support in your stewardship of the General Assembly at its forthcoming session.

Ecuador participated actively in all the informal interactive dialogues and panel discussions on the responsibility to protect, at which it expressed its position on this very important topic. With our vote on the issue, we affirm our view that the very concept of the responsibility to protect is still being analysed and discussed by the States Members of the United Nations, and that we should therefore continue our consultations on it through such informal interactive dialogues if we are make progress towards defining that concept, and particularly with a view to establishing the conceptual, institutional and political dimensions of implementing the responsibility to protect.

Ecuador recognizes that the responsibility to protect citizens is intrinsic to State sovereignty. However, we reject the notion of the preventive use of force as part of the concept of the responsibility to protect. We believe that any use of force outside the framework provided by the Charter of the United Nations is illegal and illegitimate, has no legal standing and represents an act of aggression against a sovereign State, regardless of who commits such acts and how they justify it. We will continue to participate in every forum with the aim of achieving consensus on this subject, although, regrettably, today's vote may mean that we have to distance ourselves from the consensus. In any event, if the discussion is to make progress, we must all show the necessary political will if we are to act speedily and decisively so that States can be certain that the concept of the responsibility to protect is used exclusively to prevent the crimes outlined in paragraphs 138 and 139 of resolution 60/1, of 24 October 2005. It should not be used as a pretext for intervening in another country's affairs or for political purposes, which of course is no real help to the victims of such crimes and would in fact be a violation of the Charter.

Mr. Cheng Lie (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of your important post and to assure you of the Chinese delegation's support.

China voted against including this item in the General Assembly's agenda. In our view, the 2005 World Summit Outcome document includes a clear description of the concept of the responsibility to protect and makes it clear that the scope of its application must be confined to four specific crimes — genocide, ethnic

cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. All the conditions outlined in that document should be strictly met. There are considerable differences of opinion among Member States about how to implement the responsibility to protect, and China believes that the Assembly should continue its frank informal dialogues on the responsibility to protect rather than trying to force through controversial proposals. Putting controversial issues and proposals to a vote could lead to division among Member States, to the detriment of the working atmosphere of the seventy-second session, which has only just begun. Nor is it in the interests of discussions of the responsibility to protect. For those reasons, China voted against including the responsibility to protect on the agenda of the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Mr. Zambrana (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): If I may, Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate you on your election, wish you every success during your stewardship of the General Assembly at its new session and assure you of my delegation's support for you in your work.

As a peaceloving promoter of a culture of peace, Bolivia abhors the notion of conflict and believes that it should be resolved through dialogue and preventive diplomacy. We are a State that respects international law and is party to a number of international instruments such as the Rome Statute, which has established mechanisms to prosecute and punish crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, which we firmly condemn and entirely reject. In that regard, we believe that the responsibility to protect is an obligation that is exclusively incumbent upon individual States towards their own people, and a primary responsibility that should be expressed in respect for and guarantees of fundamental rights and their protection.

With our vote, we reiterate that there is no consensus agreement on the concept and definition of the responsibility to protect or on its interpretation or the mechanisms for implementing it. If the concept of the responsibility to protect is not based on clear definitions and supported by exact terms, it runs a very high risk of becoming a tool for interfering in States' internal affairs and achieving political ends, as we have seen in a number of scenarios on the agenda of the Organization. It is important to remember the terrible consequences for the world that can result from interventionism and regime change in the name of the responsibility to protect.

We believe that any action or threat of unilateral action by one State against another is contrary to the principles of multilateralism of the Charter of the United Nations and the notion of the responsibility to protect.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I would like to take this opportunity to briefly thank all the member States that supported Australia and Ghana's initiative. Given the overwhelming number of supporters it found, I will not be able to thank all delegations in person, so I would like to formally record our appreciation for the fact that so many member States turned up on the eve of the busiest week on our calendar and said yes to convening a debate on prevention and the responsibility to protect. I would also like to encourage all Member States, regardless of their views on the responsibility to protect, to participate in the debate on this subject when it is held. The fight to get it on the agenda has not diminished our commitment to trying to establish more common ground on the substance of these issues, so that the United Nations and its Members States can work better together in order to stamp out such egregious crimes. I would like to thank delegations again and wish all of them the best of luck for next week.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

We shall now proceed with the next part of the item on our agenda.

In paragraph 94, in connection with item 167 of the draft agenda, "Financing of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 95, in connection with item 172 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 96, in connection with item 173 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office in

the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 97, in connection with item 174 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 98, in connection with item 175 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretariat in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 99, in connection with item 176 of the draft agenda, entitled "Observer status for the Global Environment Facility in the General Assembly", the General Committee decided to recommend its inclusion under heading I.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the agenda recommended by the General Committee in paragraph 100 of its report for adoption by the General Assembly, taking into account the decisions just adopted with respect to the draft agenda.

Bearing in mind that the agenda is organized under nine headings, we shall consider the inclusion of items under each heading as a whole. I should like to remind members once again that, at present, we are not discussing the substance of any item.

Items 1 and 2 have already been dealt with. We shall now turn to items 3 to 8. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the inclusion of the items listed under heading A, "Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences".

May I take it that the items listed under heading A are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to heading B, entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security". May I take it that the items listed under heading B are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Margaryan (Armenia): Since this is the first time the delegation of Armenia is taking the floor, let me extend our congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the General Assembly presidency and assure you of our delegation's full support to you throughout the work of the Assembly.

My delegation wishes to state that Armenia dissociates itself from the consensus to include item 40 in the agenda of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. I ask that Armenia's position be duly reflected in the official record of the meeting.

The President: We now turn to heading C, entitled "Development of Africa". May I take it that the item listed under this heading is included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Now we come to heading D, entitled "Promotion of human rights". May I take it that the items listed under heading D are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Heading E is entitled "Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts". May I take it that the item listed under this heading is included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next we turn to heading F, entitled "Promotion of justice and international law".

May I take it that the items listed under heading F are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to heading G, entitled "Disarmament". May I take it that the items listed under this heading are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Heading H is entitled "Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations". May I take it that the items listed under this heading are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we turn to heading I, entitled "Organizational, administrative and other matters".

May I take it that the items listed under heading I are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to section IV of the report of the General Committee on the allocation of items.

The General Committee took note of the information contained in paragraphs 101 to 103. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the information contained in paragraph 103 concerning the granting of observer status?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 105 to 109. We shall take up the recommendations one by one. Before we proceed, may I remind members that the item numbers cited here refer to the agenda in paragraph 100 of the report before us, namely, document A/72/250.

We shall now turn to paragraphs 105 (a) to (j), which relate to a number of plenary items.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of all of the information that the General Committee wishes it to take note of and to approve all of the recommendations of the General Committee contained in paragraphs 105 (a) to (j)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 106 (a) to (c), which relate to sub-item (b) of item 52, entitled "Joint panel discussion of the First and Fourth Committees on possible challenges to space security and sustainability", and item 99, entitled "General and complete disarmament" and sub-item (ii) of item 99, entitled "Nuclear disarmament verification".

May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 106 (a) to (c)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 107 (a) and (b), which relate to sub-item (e), entitled "Financial inclusion for sustainable development", and sub-item (f), entitled "Promotion of international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows in order to foster sustainable development", of item 17, and sub-item (j) of item 19, entitled "Combating sand and dust storms".

May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 107 (a) and (b)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 108 (a) to (c), which relate to item 137, entitled "Programme planning", item 146, entitled "Administration of justice at the United Nations", and item 165, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti".

May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 108 (a) to (c)?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraphs 109 (a) to (f), which relate to item 82, entitled "Expulsion of aliens", item 170, entitled "Observer status for the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan in the General Assembly", item 171, entitled "Observer status for the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office in the General Assembly", item 172, entitled "Observer status for the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism in the General Assembly", item 173, entitled "Observer status for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretariat in the General Assembly", and item 174, entitled "Observer status for the Global Environment Facility in the General Assembly".

May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 109 (a) to (f)?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to paragraph 110 of the report of the General Committee on the allocation of items to the plenary and to each Main Committee.

I first turn to the list of items recommended by the General Committee for consideration directly in plenary meetings under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items listed for plenary meetings?

It was so decided.

The President: We come next to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the First Committee under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the First Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)?

It was so decided.

The President: We come now to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Second Committee under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Second Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Third Committee under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Third Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we come to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Fifth Committee under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we come to the list of items that the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Sixth Committee under all the relevant headings.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of these items for consideration by the Sixth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the first report of the General Committee. I wish to thank all the members of the Assembly for their cooperation.

I would now like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the Holy See, in its capacity as an observer State, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolution 58/314, of 1 July 2004, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/58/871, the Holy See, in its capacity as an observer State, will participate in the work of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

I would also like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the State of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer State, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolutions 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974; 43/177, of 15 December 1988; 52/250, of 7 July 1998; resolution 67/19, of 29 November 2012, and the note by the Secretary-General contained

in document A/52/1002, the State of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer State, will participate in the work of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

In addition, I would like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the European Union, in its capacity as observer, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with resolution 65/276, of 3 May 2011, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/65/856, observers of the European Union will participate in the work of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

The meeting rose at 12.10 pm.

United Nations A/72/PV.3

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

3rd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 September 2017, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 110

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/72/1)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 15 September 2017, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1), under agenda item 110.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: I am here in a spirit of gratitude and humility for the trust the members of the General Assembly have placed in me to serve the world's peoples. "We the peoples" and the United Nations face grave challenges. Our world is in trouble. People are hurting and angry. They see insecurity rising, inequality growing, conflict spreading and climate changing. The global economy is increasingly integrated, but our sense of global community may be disintegrating. Societies are fragmented. Political discourse is polarized. Trust within and among countries is being driven down by those who demonize and divide. We are a world in pieces. We need to be a world at peace. I strongly believe that, together, we can build peace. We can restore trust and create a better world for all.

I will focus today on seven threats and tests that stand in our way. For each, the dangers are all too clear. Yet for each, if we act truly as united nations, we can find answers.

First, turning to the nuclear peril, the use of nuclear weapons should be unthinkable. Even the threat of their use can never be condoned. But today global anxieties about nuclear weapons are at the highest level since the end of the Cold War. The fear is not abstract. Millions of people live under a shadow of dread cast by the provocative nuclear and missile tests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Within the Democratic People's Republic of Korea itself, such tests do nothing to ease the plight of those who are suffering from hunger and severe violations of their human rights.

I condemn those tests unequivocally. I call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and all Member States to fully comply with Security Council resolutions. Last week's unanimous adoption of resolution 2375 (2017) tightened sanctions and sent a clear message regarding the country's international obligations. I appeal to the Council to maintain its unity. Only that unity can lead to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and, as the resolution recognizes, create an opportunity for diplomatic engagement to resolve the crisis.

When tensions rise, so does the chance of miscalculation. Fiery talk can lead to fatal misunderstandings. The solution must be political, and now is a time for statesmanship. We must not sleepwalk our way into war. More broadly, all countries must show greater commitment to the universal goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon

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States have a special responsibility to lead. Today proliferation is creating unimaginable danger, and disarmament is paralysed. There is an urgent need to prevent proliferation, to promote disarmament and to preserve the gains made in those directions. Those goals are linked: progress on one will generate progress on the other.

Secondly, let me turn to the global threat of terrorism. Nothing justifies terrorism — no cause, no grievance. Terrorism continues to cause a rising toll of death and devastation. It is destroying societies, destabilizing regions and diverting energy from more productive pursuits. National and multilateral counter-terrorism efforts have indeed disrupted networks, reclaimed territory, prevented attacks and saved lives; but we need to intensify that work. Stronger international cooperation against terrorism remains crucial.

I am grateful to the General Assembly for approving one of my first reform initiatives, that is, the establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. Next year, I intend to convene the first-ever gathering of heads of counter-terrorism agencies of Member States to forge a new international counter-terrorism partnership. But it is not enough to fight terrorists on the battlefield or to deny them funds. We must do more to address the root causes of radicalization, including real and perceived injustices and high levels of unemployment and grievances among young people. Political, religious and community leaders have a duty to stand up against hatred and serve as models of tolerance and moderation. Together, we need to make full use of United Nations instruments and expend our efforts to support the survivors. But experience has also shown that harsh crackdowns and heavy-handed approaches are counterproductive. As soon as we begin believing that violations of human rights and democratic freedoms are necessary to win the fight, we might as well have lost the war.

Thirdly, concerning unresolved conflicts and systematic violations of international humanitarian law, we are all shocked by the dramatic escalation of sectarian tensions in Myanmar's Rakhine state. A vicious cycle of persecution, discrimination, radicalization and violent repression has led to more 400,000 people desperately trying to flee, thereby putting the region's stability at risk. I take note of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi's address today and her intention to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine state, which were shared by Kofi Annan, within the shortest time possible. But let me emphasize once again that the authorities in Myanmar must end military operations, allow unhindered humanitarian access and recognize the right of refugees to return in safety and dignity. I must also address the grievances of the Rohingya, whose status has been left unresolved for far too long.

No one is winning today's wars. From Syria to Yemen, from South Sudan to the Sahel, Afghanistan and elsewhere, only political solutions can bring about peace. We should have no illusions: we will not be able to eradicate terrorism if we do not resolve the conflicts that are generating the disorder in which violent extremists flourish. Last week, I announced the establishment of a high-level advisory board on mediation. The eminent members of the board will allow us to be more effective in brokering peace around the world. The United Nations is forging closer partnerships with key regional organizations, such as the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. We continue to strengthen and modernize peacekeeping, thereby protecting civilians and saving lives around the world. Since taking office, I have sought to bring together the parties to conflicts, as well as those who exercise influence over them. As a meaningful example, I am particularly hopeful with regard to tomorrow's meeting on Libya. Last month, I visited Israel and Palestine. We must not let today's stagnation in the peace process lead to tomorrow's escalation. We must restore the hope of the two peoples. The two-State solution remains the only way forward, and it must be pursued urgently.

I must nevertheless be frank. In too many cases, the warring parties believe that war is the answer. They may speak of a willingness to compromise, but their actions too often betray a thirst for outright military victory at any cost. Violations of international humanitarian law are rampant, and impunity prevails. Civilians are paying the highest price, with women and girls facing systematic violence and oppression. In my country and during my years at the United Nations, I have seen that it is possible to move from war to peace and from dictatorship to democracy. Let us push ahead with a surge in diplomacy today and a leap in conflict prevention for tomorrow.

Fourthly, climate change puts our hopes in jeopardy. Last year was the hottest ever, and the past decade has been the hottest on record. The average

global temperature continues to climb, glaciers are receding and permafrost is decreasing. Millions of people and trillions of dollars in assets are at risk from rising seas and other climate disruptions. The number of natural disasters has quadrupled since 1970. The United States, followed by China, India, the Philippines and Indonesia, have experienced the greatest number of disasters since 1995 — more than 1,600, or one every five days. I stand in solidarity with the people of the Caribbean and the United States who have just suffered through Hurricane Irma — the longest-lasting category 5 storm ever recorded — and Maria is already on its way.

We should not link any single weather event with climate change, but scientists are clear that such extreme weather is precisely what their models predict will be the new normal of a warming world. We have had to update our language to describe what is happening. We now talk of mega-hurricanes, superstorms and rain bombs. It is time to leave the path of suicidal emissions. We know enough today to act. The science is unassailable, and I urge Governments to implement the historic Paris Agreement with ever-greater ambition. I commend those cities that are setting bold targets, and welcome the initiatives of the thousands of private enterprises, including major oil and gas companies, that are betting on a clean, green future. Energy markets are telling us that green business is good business. The falling cost of renewables is one of the most encouraging stories on the planet today, as well as the growing evidence that economies can grow as emissions decrease, with new markets, more jobs and opportunities to generate trillions of dollars in economic output. The facts are clear. Solutions are staring us in the face. Leadership needs to catch up.

(*spoke in French*)

Fifthly, growing inequalities undermine the foundations of society and the social contract. The integration of the world's economies, the expansion of trade and astonishing technological advances have brought with them remarkable benefits. More people than ever before have lifted themselves out of extreme poverty. Furthermore, the world's middle class is now more numerous than ever, and more people are living longer and healthier lives. But that progress is not equally shared. We are seeing enormous disparities with regard to income, equal opportunities and access to the fruits of research and innovation. Eight men own the same share of global wealth as half of all humankind. Regions, countries and entire communities remain at a distance from the rising tide of progress and growth and are left to their own devices in the rust belts of our world. That exclusion has a price — frustration, alienation and instability — but we have a plan aimed at changing direction so as to achieve fair and just globalization. That plan is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Half of our world's population is female. Half of our world's population is under 25 years of age. We cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals without taking advantage of the power of women and building on the enormous energy of young people. We know how fast transformation can take place today. We know that, with global wealth and assets in the billions of dollars, we do not lack the funding. Let us find the wisdom to use the tools, programmes and resources already in our hands to achieve sustainable and beneficial development for all, which is not only a goal in and of itself but is also our best tool for conflict prevention.

The dark side of innovation is the sixth threat that we must face, and it has gone from the border to the front door. Technology will continue to be at the heart of shared progress, but innovation, however essential it may be for humankind, could have unforeseen consequences. Cybersecurity threats are on the increase. Cyberwar is becoming less and less a covert reality; it is increasingly able to disrupt relations between States and destroy hundreds of structures and systems of modern life. Progress in cyberspace may certainly empower people, but the so-called "dark web" shows that some people use its potential to cause harm and serve themselves. Artificial intelligence is something new that can stimulate development and dramatically improve living conditions, but it can also have a dramatic effect on labour markets, global society and even our social fabric. Genetic engineering has moved from the pages of science fiction to the marketplace, but it has spawned new, unresolved ethical dilemmas. Unless such advances are addressed in a responsible way, they could cause incalculable damage.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Governments and international organizations are simply not prepared for the new situation. Traditional forms of regulation are simply no longer valid. It is clear that such trends and capabilities require a new generation of strategic thinking, ethical reflection and regulation. The United Nations is willing to be a forum

in which Member States, civil society, companies and the academic world are able to meet and talk about the way forward, to the benefit of all.

(*spoke in English*)

Finally, I want to talk about human mobility, which I do not perceive as a threat, even if some do. I see it as a challenge that, if properly managed, can help bring the world together. Let us be clear: we do not face only a refugee crisis, we also face a crisis of solidarity. Every country has the right to control its own borders, but that must be done in a way that protects the rights of people on the move. Instead of closed doors and open hostility, we need to re-establish the integrity of the refugee-protection regime and the simple decency of human compassion. With a true global sharing of responsibility, the number of refugees that we face can be managed. However, too many States have not risen to the occasion. I commend those countries that have shown admirable hospitality to millions of forcibly displaced people. We need to do more to support them.

We also need to do more to face the challenges of migration. The truth is that the majority of migrants move in a well-ordered fashion, while making positive contributions to their host countries and homelands. It is when migrants move in unregulated ways that the risks become clear — risks for States, but most especially for migrants who are exposed to perilous journeys.

Migration has always been with us. Climate change, demographics, instability, growing inequalities and aspirations for a better life, as well as unmet needs in labour markets, mean it is here to stay. The answer is effective international cooperation in managing migration to ensure that its benefits are more widely distributed and the human rights of all concerned are properly protected. From my experience, I can assure members that most people prefer to realize their aspirations at home. We must work together. Development cooperation must be oriented in such a way that enables them to do so. Migration should be an option, not a necessity.

We also need much stronger commitment from the international community to crack down on human traffickers and to protect their victims. Let us be clear: we will not end the tragedies in the Mediterranean, the Andaman Sea or elsewhere without creating more opportunities for regular migration, which will benefit migrants and countries alike.

I myself am a migrant, as are many people in this Hall. And yet no one expected me to risk my life on a leaky boat or cross a desert in the back of a truck to find employment outside my country of birth. Safe migration cannot be limited to the global elite. Refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants are not the problem — the problem lies in conflict, persecution and hopeless poverty.

I have been pained to see the way refugees and migrants have been stereotyped and scapegoated, and to see political figures stoke resentment in search of electoral gain. In today's world, all societies are becoming multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Such diversity must be seen as a richness, not a threat. However, to make diversity a success, we need to invest in social cohesion, so that all people feel that their identities are respected and have a stake in the community as a whole.

We need to reform our world, and I am committed to reforming our United Nations. Together, we have embarked on a comprehensive reform effort: to build a United Nations development system that supports States in bettering peoples' lives, to reinforce our ability in safeguarding people's peace, security and human rights and to embrace management practices that advance those goals instead of hindering them. We have launched a new victim-centred approach to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. We have a road map to achieve gender parity at the United Nations, and we are already on our way.

We are here to serve, relieve the suffering of "we the peoples" and help fulfil their dreams. We come from different corners of the world. Our cultures, religions and traditions vary widely — and I would say wonderfully. At times, there are competing interests among us, and sometimes there is even open conflict. That is exactly why we need the United Nations. That is exactly why multilateralism is more important than ever. We call ourselves the international community. We must act as one, because only together, as united nations, can we fulfil the promise of the Charter of the United Nations and advance human dignity for all.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Statement by the President

The President: Before I deliver my statement, I wish to express our solidarity with the people of

Dominica, who suffered the devastation of Hurricane Maria overnight. Our thoughts are with the others who are bracing for her impact, many of whom only recently suffered the effects of Hurricane Irma.

I am honoured to welcome everyone present to New York for the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I wish that I could deliver a different speech today to the one I have prepared. I wish I could point to a long list of examples of mediation and early action to successfully avert conflicts. I would prefer to talk only about people who move and migrate out of choice, not desperation. It would be great to congratulate everyone in this Hall for meeting individual climate-related commitments and for relegating extreme poverty to the history books. I hope that someone will, eventually, be able to deliver such a speech from this marble rostrum, but it cannot be me today. Instead, conflict persists as an ugly reality of our world. Civilians, not soldiers, are paying the highest price. Schools and hospitals, not military barracks, are the targets of attack.

I must also talk today about more than 65 million people leaving their homes because they are forced to do so, not because they want to. I have to use my speech today to address other major challenges, including persistent poverty, growing inequalities, indiscriminate terrorist attacks and the worsening effects of climate change. These are global challenges — every country is coping with at least one — but they are also individual in nature, touching on the life of each person.

That is not to say that there is nothing to celebrate today. We have made a collective promise to humankind by signing up to the Sustainable Development Goals. We have rallied in support of peace agreements such as the one that we saw in Colombia. We have said "enough is enough" when it comes to climate change by signing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

But we are not here today to dwell on our past achievements. We are here to look ahead. We will hear visions, ideas and, indeed, criticisms and concerns over the coming week. These will chart the course of the United Nations as it works to address the most urgent global challenges. I am confident that they will also travel home with representatives and influence their work as the world's leaders. I will now myself start the ball rolling by outlining my vision for the seventy-second session.

First, peace and prevention should be at the centre of everything the United Nations does, because when we read the Charter of the United Nations, there are only five references to war. The word "peace", however, appears 47 times. Unfortunately we are spending too much time and money reacting to conflicts, and not enough on preventing them. We need to recalibrate our efforts around peace and prevention. That is the only way to ensure that the United Nations is doing the job for which it was created.

I want to be clear. Placing peace and prevention first is not about requesting more capacity from the outside. The United Nations already has most of the tools it needs. What we are missing are the conditions in which they can be properly used. The resolutions on sustaining peace (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) should be at the top of our toolbox. They challenge us to strengthen our response to crises before they result in the outbreak or recurrence of conflict. They call for a renewed focus on prevention. If this vision is to come to life, these resolutions must be implemented. I hope to contribute to this process during my presidency.

Prevention must become a greater part of the General Assembly's work. This will be important in our ongoing review of United Nations peace operations and our engagement with the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. Prevention must also be better integrated into human rights and development. When people can live decent lives, when rights are respected and when the rule of law is present in everyday life, it is harder to turn societies to conflict.

Secondly, a stronger focus must be placed on people. This is because the United Nations was not made for diplomats or dignitaries; it was made for people. We know that many people have become disillusioned. Countless others around the world, however, have high hopes for us. They see the United Nations blue flag as a first sign of safety and the beginning of change. One of the biggest tests for us will be the process to adopt the first global compact for migration, and let me be frank here — this will be a difficult process. The issue of migration is highly divisive. We all have a different opinion on it, but we cannot turn this into an exercise of bureaucracy. We cannot be left with an agreement that works only on paper.

Another major challenge that demands a focus on people is international terrorism. This is not a problem

that can be solved with guns or shut out by barriers. People are at its centre. They are the ones contributing to it. They are the ones suffering because of it. The only way to succeed in both areas will be through choosing to focus on people rather than rigidly sticking to our individual positions. We need viable global frameworks that can be implemented by people and for people in real time.

But I want to stress one thing. We cannot fail. If we do, how can we claim that the United Nations is the best forum in which to address global challenges? Those who are cynical about the United Nations will be proved right and others will find it hard to hold on to their hope. A focus on people must also be more strongly felt in the humanitarian field. United Nations access and help to those in dire need cannot be compromised by any party. Violations of international humanitarian law are too common, and accountability for these crimes is too rare.

Finally, we must keep the promises we have made to advance prosperity and protect the planet. Through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we made a clear commitment. We promised to improve the lives of all people and secure the future of the planet we live on. However, we will not be able to achieve this without securing enough finances. We cannot sit and wait patiently for trillions of dollars to materialize. We must go out and search for them. This will involve more engagement with the private sector and financial institutions.

I see the priority clusters of peace and prevention, people, and planet and prosperity as three sides of a triangle. They might not all be the same length or the same width, but one is as important as the other. I am confident that this triangle will point in the direction of promising prospects for our world.

Let us not forget other important issues that need to be mainstreamed. Human rights are crucial; neither peace nor development can take hold without them. We must remember that we have a lot of work to do when it comes to gender equality. Women's leadership and participation should be a priority in settings of both conflict and peace.

United Nations reform will also be a main priority. There must be open and inclusive dialogue among Member States regarding the Secretary-General's reform proposals. I will work to facilitate this, and I will also personally engage closely with Member States to strengthen the role of the General Assembly. I will also promote a credible process to address the reform of the Security Council.

Finally, the United Nations should be opening its doors wider. We must strengthen our engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders, including regional and subregional organizations, civil society and the private sector. We need to hear more young voices in the Hall.

Before I conclude, allow me to make a personal observation. I want to say that we cannot call for an end to business as usual and then continue to do business as usual. If we are looking for a change in how the United Nations operates around the world, we should start here in New York. This can mean institutional change, but it can also mean a change in the way we work on a daily basis. We can engage in real dialogue, not a succession of monologues. We can concentrate on how much, and not on how little, we can give up in the spirit of compromise. We can look beyond our individual agendas and positions and see the bigger picture of why the United Nations is here and what it is trying to do.

I may not have been able to deliver a happy statement today, praising us all for making the world a better place to live in, but I will work throughout this year to increase the chances that someday one of my successors will have that great privilege. I wish the Assembly success in its deliberations, which I am confident will be in the interests of and to the benefit of all peoples.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker, I would like to remind members that the list of speakers for the general debate has been established on the agreed basis that statements should be no longer than 15 minutes so as to enable all speakers to be heard at a given meeting. Within that time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a reasonable pace so that interpretation in the other official United Nations languages may be adequately provided.

I would also like to draw the Assembly's attention to the decision taken by the General Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged. In that connection, after delivering their statements, speakers are invited to exit the General Assembly Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the rostrum, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the seventy-second session?

It was so decided.

The President: Finally, I should like to draw to the attention of members that during the general debate official photographs of all the speakers are taken by the Department of Public Information. Members interested in obtaining those photographs are requested to contact the Photo Library of the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Temer (*spoke in Portuguese: English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. You can count on the continued support of the Brazilian delegation.

I am also pleased to greet the Secretary-General in our common language, Portuguese. I once again wish the Secretary-General enduring success during his tenure.

The challenges faced by the United Nations since its creation have been manifold. Additionally, we all know that the aspirations of its founders have not been fully realized. However, the truth is that over the past 72 years, the United Nations has always represented and continues to represent hope. The truth is that the United Nations has always represented and continues to represent the possibility of a fairer world; a world of peace and prosperity; a world in which no one should face discrimination, oppression and poverty; a world in which production and consumption patterns are compatible with the well-being of present and future generations.

The United Nations has established itself as a privileged forum to build the world to which we aspire. In order to build that world, we need proper methods and a sense of realism, all without ever losing sight of our ideals. At the current moment in history, which features such distinct uncertainty and instability, there is a clear need for more diplomacy and more negotiation, not less. We need more multilateralism and dialogue, not less. We certainly need more of the United Nations. We need the United Nations to be increasingly legitimate and effective.

It is for that reason that, along with many other countries, we uphold the imperative of reforming the United Nations. It is particularly necessary to enlarge the Security Council in order to adapt it to the realities of the twenty-first century. It is urgent that we listen to the will of the overwhelming majority of the General Assembly.

One should not assume that ideas that have proved erroneous in the past may now yield good results. We reject exacerbated forms of nationalism. We do not believe in protectionism as a solution to economic challenges. Those challenges actually require effective responses to the root causes of social exclusion. The pursuit of development in all its dimensions should guide our collective action.

Brazil's commitment to sustainable development is our top priority. It permeates our public policies and our actions abroad. During our chairmanship of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, for instance, we made the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the driving blueprint for our efforts in that forum. On all fronts, Brazil has sought to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Combating climate change is a necessary part of that contribution. We stand committed to supporting the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Last year, I submitted the Brazilian instrument of ratification of the Agreement. There is no possibility of postponing action in the sphere of tackling climate change. We must act now.

I am proud to say that my country is leading the way towards a low-carbon economy. Clean and renewable energy sources account for more than 40 per cent of the Brazilian energy portfolio, which is three times more than the global average. We are leaders in hydroelectricity and bioenergy. Brazil is proud to have the world's highest tropical forest cover. Deforestation

is a matter of concern, especially in the Amazon. We have been drawing attention and allocating resources to that issue. Some good news is that data from the past year point to a reduction of more than 20 per cent in deforestation in the Amazonian region. We are on the right track and on that track we shall remain.

Another key factor of development is trade. We are committed to an open and rules-based international trade system, with the World Trade Organization and its dispute-settlement mechanism at its centre. At the upcoming Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, to be held in Buenos Aires in December, we will once again have to face up to long-standing issues, which have proved detrimental mainly to developing countries. We will have to make progress on market access to agricultural products and on eliminating agricultural subsidies that distort trade. We believe that, together, we will succeed in achieving concrete results. All these efforts contribute to the accomplishment of our main objective: to ensure opportunities for all, everywhere.

Tomorrow, I will have the honour of signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Brazil was among the drafters of the Treaty. It will be a historic moment. We reiterate our call for the nuclear Powers to undertake additional disarmament obligations. In this regard, Brazil expresses itself with the authority of a country that, while mastering nuclear technology, has voluntarily given up possessing nuclear weapons. Brazil expresses itself with the authority of a country whose own Constitution prohibits the use of nuclear technology for non-peaceful purposes; a country that was at the origin of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which, half a century ago, established the denuclearization of Latin America and the Caribbean; a country that, along with its South American and African neighbours, has turned the South Atlantic into a nuclear-weapon-free zone; lastly, a country that, along with Argentina, created a binational nuclear safeguards mechanism, which has become a benchmark for the world at large.

As we welcome the achievement represented by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we must acknowledge that there are lingering issues of serious concern on the peace and security agenda. The recent nuclear and missile tests on the Korean peninsula constitute a serious threat to which none of us can be indifferent. Brazil condemns these acts in the strongest possible terms. We must urgently seek a peaceful resolution to the current situation, whose consequences are unimaginable.

In the Middle East, talks between Israel and Palestine remain at a standstill. As a friend of both Palestinians and Israelis, Brazil continues to support the solution of two States living side by side in peace and security, within internationally recognized and mutually agreed borders.

In Syria, despite the de-escalation of recent months, we are still witnessing a conflict with tragic humanitarian consequences. The solution that must be sought in Syria is essentially political in nature and can no longer be postponed. Similarly, in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Mali and the Central African Republic, wars have caused intolerable suffering that extends beyond borders.

Let us visit the refugee and displaced person camps in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Kenya. Let us listen to the stories of those who have lost fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. These families have been engulfed by the irrationality of conflicts that seem to know no limits, conflicts that result in violations of humanitarian law with unacceptable frequency.

Our Secretary-General is right. We should reinvigorate the mechanisms of conflict prevention. Prevention is about diplomacy. It is about development.

It is crucial to recognize the nexus between security and development. This recognition has guided Brazil's participation in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). As MINUSTAH concludes its mandate, the international community must maintain its commitment to the Haitian people. Brazil certainly will do so.

In South America, Colombia is ending more than 50 years of conflict. Brazil will continue to be a resolute partner in this effort.

From Barcelona to Kabul, from Alexandria to Manchester, repeated demonstrations of cowardly violence do not let us forget the evil of terrorism. This evil feeds on fundamentalism and exclusion, and no country is immune to it. Unity is crucial, particularly in view of the capacity of terrorism to adapt to new ages and environments. We will not be frightened by terror, nor will we allow it to weaken our belief in freedom and tolerance.

In many of our countries, transnational crime also undermines the security and tranquillity of individuals and families. Only through coordination and collaboration will we effectively combat trafficking in persons, arms and drugs, and money-laundering. It was in this spirit that Brazil organized, in November 2016, a ministerial meeting of South American countries on border security, and it is in this spirit that we will continue cooperating with countries around the world to tackle organized crime.

Regrettably, human rights violations remain frequent throughout the world — both violations of civil and political rights, as well as of economic, social and cultural rights. We must ensure that every individual everywhere can live with dignity, according to his or her convictions and choices.

Brazil is a country of deep-rooted liberties, which was and is still being built on a foundation of diversity — diversity of ethnicity, culture, creed and thought. More than anything, it is from this diversity that we draw our strength as a nation. We reject racism, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination. We are party to the main international human rights treaties and members of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court. We have extended a standing invitation to United Nations special rapporteurs.

Today we have one of the most modern refugee laws in the world. We have just updated our immigration law, guided by the principle of humanitarian reception. We have granted humanitarian visas to Haitian and Syrian citizens and we have welcomed thousands of migrants and refugees from Venezuela.

The human rights situation in Venezuela continues to deteriorate. We are on the side of the Venezuelan people, with whom we share a fraternal bond. In South America, there is no longer room for alternatives to democracy. This is what we have stated in MERCOSUR and what we will continue to uphold.

Brazil is going through a moment of decisive transformation. With structural reforms, we are overcoming an unprecedented economic crisis. We are recovering our fiscal balance, and with it, the credibility of our economy. We are once again creating jobs. We are recovering the State's capacity to implement social policies that are indispensable to a country like ours. We have learned and are applying this elementary rule in practice: without fiscal responsibility, social responsibility is nothing more than empty words. The new Brazil that is emerging from these reforms is a country that is more open to the world.

That is the attitude of openness that we bring to the United Nations, as well as to MERCOSUR; the Group of 20; the Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa group of countries; the India, Brazil and South Africa group of countries; and to all forums in which we participate. It is the attitude of openness that we have adopted towards each of our partners in our region and beyond it.

South America is our immediate neighbour. For that reason, we have worked for a prosperous and democratic South America. We have worked for an increasing convergence of the integration processes in Latin America and the Caribbean. A significant example thereof are the present closer ties between the Southern Common Market and the Pacific Alliance. Together, the countries of these two different groups constitute a market of almost 470 million people, which accounts for over 90 per cent of Latin America's gross domestic product.

Africa, in turn, is a continent with which we are associated by strong historical and cultural ties. Africa is a continent where we wish to have both increasing cooperation initiatives and partnerships for development. With regard to Europe, we have cultivated long-standing friendships and we have worked to boost trade and investment flows there. Likewise in Asia and the Pacific region — the most dynamic hub of the global economy — we have stepped up our relations with both traditional partners and with new ones. We have also opened up new trade fronts with Asia and the Pacific.

This has been our foreign policy — a truly universalist foreign policy. And the fact is that the General Assembly is the most universal of all forums we have and can count on. Here, we can all benefit from the broadest and most pluralistic array of perspectives. Here, we find the parameters and standards that govern respectful coexistence. And here our nations shall become more united, and aim at the ultimate development of our peoples, the dignity of our citizens and the security of our planet.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Temer, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Trump: I welcome everyone to New York. It is a profound honour to stand here in my home city as a representative of the American people to address the people of the world.

As millions of our citizens continue to suffer the effects of the devastating hurricanes that have struck our country, I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to every leader in the Hall who has offered assistance and aid. The American people are strong and resilient, and they will emerge from these hardships more determined than ever before.

Fortunately, the United States of America has done very well since election day, last 8 November. The stock market is at an all-time high. That is a record. Unemployment is at its lowest level in 16 years, and because of our regulatory and other reforms, we have more people working in the United States today than ever before. Companies are moving back, creating job growth the likes of which our country has not seen in a very long time, and it has just been announced that we will be spending almost $700 billion on our military and defence. Our military will soon be the strongest it has ever been.

For more than 70 years, in times of war and peace, the leaders of nations, movements and religions have stood before the Assembly. Like them, I intend to address some of the very serious threats before us today, but also the enormous potential waiting to be unleashed. We live in a time of extraordinary opportunity. Breakthroughs in science, technology and medicine are curing illnesses and solving problems that prior generations thought impossible to solve.

But each day also brings news of growing dangers that threaten everything we cherish and value. Terrorists and extremists have gathered strength and spread to every region of the planet. Rogue regimes represented in this organ not only support terrorists, but threaten other nations and their own people with the most destructive weapons known to humankind. Authoritarian Powers seek to collapse the values, systems and alliances that have prevented conflict and tilted the world towards freedom since the Second World War. International criminal networks traffic drugs, weapons and people; force dislocation and mass migration; and threaten our borders. New forms of aggression exploit technology to menace our citizens.

To put it simply, we meet at a time of both immense promise and great peril. It is entirely up to us whether we lift the world to new heights or let it fall into a valley of disrepair. We have it in our power, should we so choose, to lift millions from poverty, to help citizens realize their dreams and to ensure that new generations of children are raised free from violence, hatred and fear.

This institution was founded in the aftermath of two world wars to help shape this better future. It is based on the vision that diverse nations could cooperate to protect their sovereignty, preserve their security and promote their prosperity. It was in the same period, exactly 70 years ago, that the United States developed the Marshall Plan to help restore Europe, based on the three beautiful pillars of peace, sovereignty and security, and prosperity. The Marshall Plan was built on the noble idea that the whole world is safer when nations are strong, independent and free. As President Truman said in his message to Congress at that time, "Our support of European recovery is in full accord with our support of the United Nations".

The success of the United Nations depends upon the independent strength of its Members. To overcome the perils of the present and to achieve the promise of the future, we must begin with the wisdom of the past. Our success depends on a coalition of strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty to promote security, prosperity and peace for themselves and for the world.

We do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions or even systems of Government, but we do expect all nations to uphold the two core

sovereign duties to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation. That is the beautiful vision of this institution, and it is the foundation for cooperation and success. Strong sovereign nations let diverse countries with different values, different cultures and different dreams not just coexist but work side by side on the basis of mutual respect. Strong sovereign nations let their people take ownership of the future and control their own destiny. Strong, sovereign nations allow individuals to flourish in the fullness of the life intended by God.

In America, we seek not to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch. This week gives our country a special reason to take pride in that example. We are celebrating the 230th anniversary of our beloved Constitution, the oldest constitution still in use in the world today. That timeless document has been the foundation of peace, prosperity and freedom for the Americans and for countless millions around the globe whose own countries have found inspiration in its respect for human nature, human dignity and the rule of law. The greatest part of the United States Constitution is its first three beautiful words. They are "We the people". Generations of Americans have sacrificed to maintain the promise of those words, the promise of our country and of our great history. In America, the people govern, the people rule, and the people are sovereign.

I was elected not to take power but to give power to the American people, where it belongs. In foreign affairs, we are renewing this founding principle of sovereignty. Our Government's first duty is to its people, to our citizens; to serve their needs, to ensure their safety, to preserve their rights and to defend their values. As President of the United States, I will always put America first, just as the leaders of the countries present will always and should always put their countries first. All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens, and the nation State remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition. But making a better life for our people also requires us to work together in close harmony and unity to create a more safe and peaceful future for all people. The United States will forever be a great friend to the world, and especially to its allies, but we can no longer be taken advantage of or enter into one-sided deals where the United States gets nothing in return.

As long as I hold my office, I will defend America's interest above all else; but in fulfilling our obligations to our own nations, we also realize that it is in everyone's interest to seek a future where all nations can be sovereign, prosperous and secure. America does more than speak for the values expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. Our citizens have paid the ultimate price to defend our freedom and the freedom of many nations represented in this great Hall. America's devotion is measured on the battlefields where our young men and women have fought and sacrificed alongside our allies. From the beaches of Europe, to the deserts of the Middle East, to the jungles of Asia, it is an eternal credit to the American character that even after we and our allies emerged victorious from the bloodiest war in history, we did not seek territorial expansion or attempt to oppose and impose our way of life on others. Instead, we helped to build institutions such as this one to defend the sovereignty, security and prosperity of all.

For the diverse nations of the world, this is our hope. We want harmony and friendship, not conflict and strife. We are guided by outcomes, not ideology. We have a policy of principled realism rooted in shared goals, interests and values. That realism forces us to confront a question facing every leader and nation in the Hall. It is a question we cannot escape or avoid. Will we slide down the path of complacency, numb to the challenges, threats and even wars that we face, or do we have enough strength and pride to confront those dangers today so that our citizens can enjoy peace and prosperity tomorrow?

If we desire to lift up our citizens, if we aspire to the approval of history, then we must fulfil our sovereign duties to the people we faithfully represent. We must protect our nations, their interests and their futures. We must reject threats to sovereignty, from Ukraine to the South China Sea. We must uphold respect for law, respect for borders and respect for culture and the peaceful engagement these allow. And, just as the founders of this organ intended, we must work together and confront together those who threaten us with chaos, turmoil and terror.

The scourge of our planet today is a small group of rogue regimes that violate every principle on which the United Nations is based. They respect neither their own citizens nor the sovereign rights of their countries. If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph. When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength.

No one has shown more contempt for other nations and for the well-being of their own people than the depraved regime in North Korea. It is responsible for the starvation deaths of millions of North Koreans and for the imprisonment, torture, killing and oppression of countless more. We were all witness to the regime's deadly abuse when an innocent American college student, Otto Warmbier, was returned to America only to die a few days later. We saw it in the assassination of the dictator's brother, using banned nerve agents in an international airport. We know it kidnapped a sweet 13-year-old Japanese girl from a beach in her own country to enslave her as a language tutor for North Korea's spies.

If that were not twisted enough, now North Korea's reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles threatens the entire world with unthinkable loss of human life. It is an outrage that some nations would not only trade with such a regime, but would arm, supply and financially support a country that imperils the world with nuclear conflict. No nation on Earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons and missiles. The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime. The United States is ready, willing and able but, hopefully, that will not be necessary. That is what the United Nations is all about. That is what the United Nations is for. Let us see how they do.

It is time for North Korea to realize that denuclearization is its only acceptable future. The Security Council recently held two unanimous 15-to-nothing votes, adopting hard-hitting resolutions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. I would like to thank China and Russia for joining the vote to impose sanctions, along with all of the other members of the Security Council. I thank all who were involved, but we must do much more. It is time for all nations to work together to isolate the Kim regime until it ceases its hostile behaviour.

We face that decision not only in North Korea. It is far past time for the nations of the world to confront another reckless regime — one that speaks openly of mass murder, vowing death to America, destruction to Israel and ruin for many leaders and nations represented in the Hall today. The Iranian Government masks a corrupt dictatorship behind the false guise of a democracy. It has turned a wealthy country with a rich history and culture into an economically depleted rogue State whose chief exports are violence, bloodshed and chaos. The longest-suffering victims of Iran's leaders are in fact its own people. Rather than use its resources to improve Iranian lives, its oil profits go to fund Hizbullah and other terrorists who kill innocent Muslims and attack their peaceful Arab and Israeli neighbours.

That wealth, which rightly belongs to Iran's people, also goes to shore up Bashar Al-Assad's dictatorship, fuel Yemen's civil war and undermine peace throughout the entire Middle East. We cannot let a murderous regime continue such destabilizing activities, while building dangerous missiles. And we cannot abide by an agreement if it provides cover for the eventual construction of a nuclear programme.

The Iran deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into. Frankly, that deal is an embarrassment to the United States — and I do not think that the Assembly has heard the last of it, believe me. It is time for the entire world to join us in demanding that Iran's Government end its pursuit of death and destruction. It is time for the regime to free all the Americans and citizens of other nations whom they have unjustly detained. Above all, Iran's Government must stop supporting terrorists, begin serving its own people and respect the sovereign rights of its neighbours.

The entire world understands that the good people of Iran want change and, other than the vast military power of the United States, that Iran's people are what their leaders fear the most. That is what causes the regime to restrict Internet access, tear down satellite dishes, shoot unarmed student protesters and imprison political reformers. Oppressive regimes cannot endure forever, and the day will come when the people will face a choice. Will they continue down the path of poverty, bloodshed and terror, or will the Iranian people return to the nation's proud roots as a centre of civilization, culture and wealth, where people can be happy and prosperous once again?

The Iranian regime's support for terror is in stark contrast to the recent commitments of many of its neighbours to fight terrorism and halt its financing. In Saudi Arabia, early last year, I was greatly honoured to address the leaders of more than 50 Arab and Muslim nations. We agree that all responsible nations must

work together to confront terrorists and the Islamic extremism that inspires them. We will stop radical Islamic terrorism because we cannot allow it to tear up our nation and, indeed, to tear up the entire world.

We must deny terrorists safe haven, transit, funding and any form of support for their vile and sinister ideology. We must drive them out of our nations. It is time to expose and hold responsible those countries that support and finance terror groups, such as Al-Qaida, Hizbullah, the Taliban and others that slaughter innocent people. The United States and its allies are working together throughout the Middle East to crush loser terrorists and stop the re-emergence of the safe havens they use to launch attacks on all of our people.

Last month, I announced a new strategy for victory in the fight against that evil in Afghanistan. From now on, our security interests — not the arbitrary benchmarks and timetables set up by politicians — will dictate the length and scope of military operations. I have also totally changed the rules of engagement in our fight against the Taliban and other terrorist groups. In Syria and Iraq, we have made big gains towards lasting defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). In fact, our country has achieved more against ISIS in the last eight months than it has in many years combined.

We seek the de-escalation of the Syrian conflict and a political solution that honours the will of the Syrian people. The actions of the criminal regime of Bashar Al-Assad, including the use of chemical weapons against his own citizens, even innocent children, shocked the conscience of every decent person. No society can be safe if banned chemical weapons are allowed to spread. That is why the United States carried out a missile strike on the air base that launched the attack. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations agencies that are providing vital humanitarian assistance in the areas liberated from ISIS. We especially thank Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon for their role in hosting refugees from the Syrian conflict.

The United States is a compassionate nation and has spent billions and billions of dollars to help support that effort. We seek an approach to refugee resettlement that is designed to help those horribly treated and enable their eventual return to their home countries to be part of the rebuilding process. For the cost of resettling one refugee in the United States, we can assist more than 10 in their home region. Out of the goodness of our hearts, we offer financial assistance to host countries in the region and we support the recent agreements of the Group of 20 nations that will seek to host refugees as close to their home countries as possible.

That is the safe, responsible and humanitarian approach. For decades, the United States has dealt with migration challenges here in the western hemisphere. We have learned that, over the long term, uncontrolled migration is deeply unfair to both the sending and the receiving countries. For the sending countries, it reduces domestic pressure to pursue needed political and economic reforms and drains them of the human capital necessary to motivate and implement those reforms. For the receiving countries, the substantial costs of uncontrolled migration are borne overwhelmingly by low-income citizens, whose concerns are often ignored by both media and Government.

I want to salute the work of the United Nations in seeking to address the problems that cause people to flee from their homes. The United Nations- and the African Union-led peacekeeping missions have made invaluable contributions in stabilizing conflicts in Africa.

The United States continues to lead the world in humanitarian assistance, including famine prevention and relief in South Sudan, Somalia, northern Nigeria and Yemen. We have invested in better health and opportunity all over the world through programmes like the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the President's Malaria Initiative, the Global Health Security Agenda, the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, and the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, which is part of our commitment to empowering women all across the globe.

We also thank the Secretary-General for recognizing that the United Nations must reform if it is to be an effective partner in confronting threats to sovereignty, security and prosperity. Too often the focus of the Organization has not been on results, but on bureaucracy and process. In some cases, States that seek to subvert this institution's noble ends have hijacked the very systems that are supposed to advance them. For example, it is a massive source of embarrassment to the United Nations that some Governments with egregious human rights records sit on the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The United States is one of 193 countries in the United Nations, and yet we pay 22 per cent of the entire

budget and more. In fact, we pay far more than anybody realizes. The United States bears an unfair cost burden, but, to be fair, if it could actually accomplish all of its stated goals, especially the goal of peace, this investment would easily be well worth it.

Major portions of the world are in conflict, and some in fact are going to hell, but the powerful people in this Hall, under the guidance and auspices of the United Nations, can solve many of these vicious and complex problems. The American people hope that one day soon the United Nations can be a much more accountable and effective advocate for human dignity and freedom around the world. In the meantime, we believe that no nation should have to bear a disproportionate share of the burden — militarily or financially.

Nations of the world must take a greater role in promoting secure and prosperous societies in their own regions. That is why, in the western hemisphere, the United States has stood against the corrupt destabilizing regime in Cuba and embraced the enduring dream of the Cuban people to live in freedom. My Administration recently announced that we will not lift sanctions on the Cuban Government until it makes fundamental reforms.

We have also imposed tough, calibrated sanctions on the socialist Maduro regime in Venezuela, which has brought a once-thriving nation to the brink of total collapse. The socialist dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro Moros has inflicted terrible pain and suffering on the good people of that country. This corrupt regime destroyed a prosperous nation by imposing a failed ideology that has produced poverty and misery everywhere it has been tried. To make matters worse, Maduro has defied his own people, stealing power from their elected representatives to preserve his disastrous rule.

The Venezuelan people are starving, and their country is collapsing. Their democratic institutions are being destroyed. This situation is completely unacceptable, and we cannot stand by and watch. As a responsible neighbour and friend, we, together with all others, have a goal: to help them regain their freedom, recover their country and restore their democracy.

I would like to thank leaders in this Hall for condemning the regime and providing vital support to the Venezuelan people. The United States has taken important steps to hold the regime accountable. We are prepared to take further action if the Government of Venezuela persists on its path to impose authoritarian rule on the Venezuelan people.

We are fortunate to have incredibly strong and healthy trade relationships with many of the Latin American countries gathered here today. Our economic bond forms a critical foundation for advancing peace and prosperity for all of our peoples and all of our neighbours. I ask every country represented here today to be prepared to do more to address this very real crisis. We call for the full restoration of democracy and political freedoms in Venezuela.

The problem in Venezuela is not that socialism has been poorly implemented, but that socialism has been faithfully implemented. From the Soviet Union to Cuba to Venezuela, wherever true socialism or communism has been adopted, it has delivered anguish and devastation and failure. Those who preach the tenets of those discredited ideologies only contribute to the continued suffering of the people who live under those cruel systems. America stands with every person living under a brutal regime. Our respect for sovereignty is also a call for action.

All people deserve a Government that cares for their safety, their interests and their well-being, including their prosperity. In America, we seek stronger ties of business and trade with all nations of goodwill, but that trade must be fair and it must be reciprocal. For too long the American people were told that mammoth multinational trade deals, unaccountable international tribunals and powerful global bureaucracies were the best way to promote their success. But as those promises flowed, millions of jobs vanished and thousands of factories disappeared. Others gamed the system and broke the rules, and our great middle class, once the bedrock of American prosperity, was forgotten and left behind. But they are forgotten no more, and they will never be forgotten again.

While America will pursue cooperation and commerce with other nations, we are renewing our commitment to the first duty of every Government: the duty to our citizens. This bond is the source of America's strength and that of every responsible nation represented here today. If the Organization is to have any hope of successfully confronting the challenges before us, it will depend, as President Truman said some 70 years ago, on the independent strength of its Members. If we are to embrace the opportunities of the future and overcome the present dangers together,

there can be no substitute for strong, sovereign and independent nations, nations that are rooted in their histories and invested in their destinies; nations that seek allies to befriend, not enemies to conquer; and most important of all, nations that are home to patriots, to men and women who are willing to sacrifice for their countries, their fellow citizens and for all that is best in the human spirit.

In remembering the great victory that led to this body's founding, we must never forget that those heroes who fought against evil also fought for the nations that they love. Patriotism led the Poles to die to save Poland, the French to fight for a free France and the Brits to stand strong for Britain. Today if we do not invest ourselves, our hearts and our minds in our nations, if we will not build strong families, safe communities and healthy societies for ourselves, no one can do it for us. We cannot wait for someone else, for faraway countries or far-off bureaucracies. We cannot do it.

We must solve our problems to build our prosperity, to secure our future, or we will be vulnerable to decay, domination and defeat. The true question for the United Nations today, for people all over the world who hope for better lives for themselves and their children is a basic one: are we still patriots? Do we love our nations enough to protect their sovereignty and to take ownership of their futures? Do we revere them enough to defend their interests, preserve their cultures and ensure a peaceful world for their citizens?

One of the greatest American patriots, John Adams, wrote that the American Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people. That was the moment when America awoke, when we looked around and understood that we were a nation. We realized who we were, what we valued and what we would give our lives to defend. From its very first moments, the American story is the story of what is possible when people take ownership of their future. The United States of America has been among the greatest forces for good in the history of the world and the greatest defenders of sovereignty, security and prosperity for all.

Now we are calling for a great reawakening of nations, for the revival of their spirits, their pride, their people and their patriotism. History is asking us whether we are up to the task. Our answer will be a renewal of will, a rediscovery of resolve and a rebirth of devotion. We need to defeat the enemies of humankind and unlock the potential of life itself. Our hope is a word and a world of proud, independent nations that embrace their duties, seek friendship, respect others and make common cause in the greatest shared interest of all, a future of dignity and peace for the people of this wonderful Earth. This is the true vision of the United Nations, the ancient wish of every people and the deepest yearning that lives inside every sacred soul.

So let this be our mission and let this be our message to the world: we will fight together, sacrifice together and stand together for peace, for freedom, for justice, for family, for humankind and for the Almighty God who made us all.

God bless the nations of the world and God bless the United States of America.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Donald Trump, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 10.50 a.m.

Address by Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Condé (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me, as the current Chairman of the African Union, to take the floor in this melting pot of multilateralism to address the Assembly. The theme that unites us is "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". It is a topic of particular relevance to the African continent.

At the outset, I would like to convey my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I have no doubt with respect to the dynamism that you

will imprint on our work in order to build on the work of your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, to whom we pay tribute for having made Africa his priority, thereby bestowing a remarkable impetus to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Africa, once subjugated, enslaved, malleable and marginalized, has awoken. It has risen up to fight for sustainable development, justice and good governance. Today more than ever, Africa is determined to take its destiny into its own hands. It is fully determined to be the main stakeholder in its development and to fully play its role in the management of international affairs.

The task will not be easy. However, we have faith because we have the potential and the assets necessary to lift our continent to great heights on the world stage. With that in mind, Africa extends a sincere and friendly hand to all partners of goodwill, conscious of the following principles: that there can exist true happiness only when it is shared; that there can be wealth only when it is equitably distributed; that there can be viable and supportive partnership only when it is equal; that there can be enduring peace only when it is inclusive; that there can be sustainable development only when it respects and consolidates the dignity of peoples.

The interdependence of the challenges facing humankind necessitates a paradigm shift in our perceptions and actions, particularly in Africa, whose priorities must be understood not through empathy but rather through pragmatism. In today's world, destinies of States are no longer isolated. Massive refugee flows, large-scale migrations, natural disasters and pandemics, which all touch on our collective consciousness, represent the sad illustration of that reality. Our new approach should place more emphasis on human beings and the restoration of their dignity if we want to eradicate poverty and achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda at the international level and Agenda 2063 at the regional level constitute major steps forward in our fight against poverty, provided that we honour our commitments.

The fact that Africa is lagging will not always be the case. Africa has been the most dynamic continent over the past decade. According to forecasts by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, that growth will continue despite falling prices of raw materials, which are set outside the continent, and the fact that our economies remain heavily dependent on them. Given that situation, we need to diversify our economies and make them more resilient through increased investment in the sectors with real potential for sustainable growth, such as agriculture, infrastructure, information and communications technologies and energy.

The industrialization and structural transformation to which Africa aspires will depend not only on our access to energy, but above all on the continent's economic integration through the effective implementation of the continental free trade area, which is a prelude to an African common market. Africans yearn for prosperity, which is energetically embraced by the young population and is being addressed energetically by African leaders, who have decided to dedicate the African Union theme to 2017 to youth and to proclaim 2018-2027 the African Decade for Technical, Professional and Entrepreneurial Training and Youth Employment.

The African Union has resolutely undertaken to find lasting solutions to the numerous challenges confronting young people with a view to making that stratum of society, which represents 70 per cent of our population, the real driving force of development on our continent. That will guarantee stability, security, peace and the harmonious and sustainable development of our planet. I therefore cannot fail to advocate for an African initiative aimed at recruiting, training and deploying 2 million community health-care workers throughout the whole of the continent. I urge the international community to support that initiative, which will create decent jobs, prevent pandemics and ensure the well-being of our peoples.

Africa has decided to take responsibility for itself and to speak henceforth with one voice in order to find lasting solutions to its problems. The appointment of Heads of State as champions allows the African Union to talk with one voice on crucial matters. We have launched an institutional reform process to enhance the effectiveness of our Organization, streamline its action and reaffirm its political, economic and financial autonomy, thereby enabling us to play a leading role on the international scene.

The Kigali decision to impose a 0.2 per cent levy on eligible imports to finance the African Union demonstrates Africa's resolve to shoulder its responsibilities. In the same vein, we are determined to eradicate hotspots in Africa by promoting dialogue and finding African solutions. We urge the international

community to focus its action to that end, in particular in Libya, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, where some parallel initiatives are inhibiting the return to stability. Africa must no longer be left on the sidelines of decisions affecting it. To that end, it will strive to establish an international institutional architecture equipped to effect the changes our people rightly expect.

The Security Council, which has the primary responsibility of maintaining world peace and security, no longer reflects current realities. How is it that Africa, the third Power in terms of demography in the world, is not represented at an appropriate level within the Security Council, while 70 per cent of questions discussed there affect Africa? It is high time to repair that injustice, which has gone on for too long. We reiterate the pertinence of the African Common Position as contained in the Ezulwini Consensus. We call for the enlargement of the Security Council in the two categories of membership, including two permanent seats and a total of five non-permanent seats for Africa, chosen by the African Union. Furthermore, if it is not possible to abolish the veto, the new permanent members of the Security Council must enjoy the same prerogatives and privileges as the current members.

In terms of managing crises and conflicts in Africa, the African Union promotes a regional approach. Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union must be part of a dynamic to build the capacities for action of regions, which can best understand the root causes of crises and conflicts and find appropriate solutions to them. To that end, Security Council resolution 2359 (2017), on the deployment on the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, is an important milestone towards consolidating the partnership that we are seeking on questions of peace and security in Africa. I reiterate our appeal for the effective mobilization of the resources necessary to operationalize that force.

The African Union will spare no effort to assume its responsibility to contribute 25 per cent to the financing of peacekeeping operations in Africa, as mandated by the Security Council. Regarding the prospect of silencing the guns by 2020, we welcome the vision of Secretary-General António Guterres, placing the quest for peace at the heart of his action, with a particular focus on preventive diplomacy.

The African Union is fully committed to prioritizing prevention, mediation, promoting dialogue, finding peaceful political solutions and peacebuilding, which are less costly than peacekeeping operations, the effectiveness of which raises many questions. We encourage the reform initiative of Secretary-General Guterres, in particular the restructuring of the peace and security architecture, and recall that in order for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations to be viable and effective, it must include all Member States, which must be able to make their contributions through the dedicated intergovernmental processes.

Regarding terrorism and extreme violence, the African Union firmly condemns the barbaric acts that have struck Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Iran, and reiterates its deep sympathy to and solidarity with the Governments and peoples affected by those heinous crimes. The African Union considers that only through increased international cooperation, especially with respect to the exchange of information and intelligence, will we be able to fight that scourge and stem its sources of financing. It goes without saying that our aims will be fully achieved only if additional efforts are deployed to eradicate poverty, exclusion and radicalization. We can defeat terrorism once and for allonly all by putting an end to poverty, as it flourishes in that climate. Africa must therefore manage its energy and develop its infrastructure in order to ensure inclusive development.

How can we remain silent confronted with the daily torments of the Palestinian people, victims of occupation? The African Union reiterates its unfailing support to the long-suffering people of Palestine in its legitimate struggle to reaffirm its inalienable right to independence. Africa remains convinces that any viable and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict necessarily involves the creation of two States living side by side in security, within secure, internationally recognized borders based on those before 1967.

We also remain very concerned by the situation on the Korean peninsula, and we urge all parties to exercise restraint. We reaffirm our commitment to the total denuclearization of the peninsula, in line with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The twenty-first century will undoubtedly be the moment when Africans will have a bigger and more decisive say. There is an increasingly strong feeling among African leaders and young people that the time

for renewal has come. African women and young people are determined to write a new page in the history of humankind. Let us give them the opportunity or they will seize it for themselves. Together, let us create a globalization that is more humane and positive. Let us make our planet safer and let us preserve it. To that end, the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Plan of Action and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change offer a reference framework. Let us strive to implement them effectively.

I cannot conclude without launching an urgent appeal to the international community to provide better assistance to Sierra Leone, affected by one of the worst natural disasters in its history. Once again, we offer our compassion to and solidarity with the people and Government of that brotherly country.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guinea for the statement just made.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: Before proceeding further, I would like to request that representatives make an effort to maintain silence in the General Assembly Hall in order not to interrupt the proceedings and out of courtesy to other delegations. I rely on those present to cooperate in maintaining order and quiet in the Hall, in keeping with the dignity and the decorum expected of members of the General Assembly.

Address by Ms. Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Ms. Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency, Ms. Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Leuthard (*spoke in French*): I wish to express my sincere condolences to the Government and the citizens of Dominica and the Caribbean region, who are suffering from the destruction caused by the hurricanes. Switzerland will support the region.

Since the year 2000, humankind has made remarkable progress in the fight against these major scourges: hunger, extreme poverty and difficulties in accessing education. But famine still affects 800 million people in the world, and every 10 seconds a child dies from malnutrition. Other challenges include climate change, global inequality, conflict and humanitarian disasters, as well as forced displacement and migration. No country, no actor on the world stage is in a position to find, alone, the answers to the challenges of today. They are too large. They are too complex. They transcend borders, and they concern the entire international community.

We therefore need a forum where we can meet. We need a forum where we can develop solutions and monitor their implementation. We need an actor with the necessary legitimacy to contribute to the implementation of these solutions on the ground.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to recall Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. The purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security and, to that end, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace. Collective, not individual. Because I am a patriot and because I defend, as the President of Switzerland, the interests of my country, we need a strong multilateral system. We need a strong United Nations.

(*spoke in French*)

In other words, we need the United Nations, and we need a strong United Nations. The fact that we must be reminded of that is a sign that should put us on alert. In order to preserve and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations, we must invest ceaselessly. Switzerland is actively involved in that regard. Investment in substantive issues is a top priority. It is important that we place at the heart of the activities of the United Nations the issues that will be of fundamental importance, tomorrow as today.

In that regard, the States Members of the United Nations have made important strides in recent years. I am thinking, of course, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and of the desire to transfer resources from post-conflict management to prevention, in order

to intensify peacebuilding activities. In those areas, it is necessary to make progress towards the objectives set. In that respect, the 2030 Agenda offers a good example. Its success will be measured by the yardstick of its implementation.

Important steps have also been taken within the United Nations. Switzerland welcomes in particular the reforms of the United Nations system that Secretary-General Guterres is working to achieve in the three areas of peace and security, development and management.

With regard to peace and security, Switzerland supports the priority that the Secretary-General gives to prevention for a very simple reason. When a conflict arises, the price to pay — humanitarian, economic and financial — is much higher than the cost of prevention activities. In order to strengthen conflict prevention, it is essential to promote human rights. Switzerland calls on all States to support the appeal of 13 June, which calls for human rights to be at the core of conflict prevention. Increasing mediation capabilities is another important means of preventing conflicts. In addition, the Global High-level Panel on Water and Peace, launched at the initiative of Switzerland, proposed yesterday, here in New York, measures to better prevent water-related conflicts. The United Nations and regional organizations can play a major role in that regard.

Switzerland is actively committed to the non-proliferation and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the use of which would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. It is convinced that only negotiations and a diplomatic process will lead to a solution to the security situation posed by the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula.

Trust is another important aspect. If an actor is to be able to take effective preventive measures, that actor needs to be trusted. For the United Nations, this means that the quality of the partnership established with the host State concerned and its population is of paramount importance. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse break this relationship of trust. That is why Switzerland supports the Secretary-General's action against all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation committed by United Nations staff in the field. As part of its commitment to that issue, Switzerland will contribute to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

With regard to the United Nations development system, we welcome the proposal to further encourage joint initiatives by the various entities of the Organization.

Allow me to mention two examples of areas where we face major challenges: migration and digital technology.

By the end of 2016, the number of displaced persons across the world had reached a level not seen since the Second World War. The majority of them have been displaced in their own country. In Europe, for example, we must succeed in finding a solution based on solidarity between countries, and we must stabilize the political situation in Libya. Switzerland is working to ensure that the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration addresses not only the challenges caused by international migration, but also its opportunities. The road ahead remains long. It is necessary that all States participate in that work. We are pleased to be able to contribute concretely to its success thanks to the involvement our Permanent Representative in New York's as a co-facilitator of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Another topical challenge is the advent of digital technology, which is dramatically transforming the world. It represents a great opportunity, but also a cross-border challenge. Topics such as access to the Internet for all and the impact of digitization on sustainable development, as well as cybersecurity, should be addressed together. The twelfth Internet Governance Forum, which Switzerland will host in Geneva in December, will provide an opportunity to discuss those issues.

So as to maintain the capacity of the United Nations, we must also invest in the relevant processes — because the United Nations stands out as much by its areas of work as by its methods of work. Effective and modern management is needed to ensure the robustness of the United Nations system. Reforms in management are therefore essential.

In our interconnected world, dialogue is essential. Dialogue requires the time and involvement of all parties. It has to be conducted on a broad basis and involve all the relevant actors. For example, it appears that political dialogue among States is insufficient with regard to combating climate change. Extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, clearly show that the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must be implemented quickly. Scientists believe that if nothing is done, such

phenomena will become a new reality with which we will have to deal. The private sector, whose role in innovation, progress and development is essential, is involved, for example, in developing solutions, in consultation with the scientific community and the political sphere. Scientific diplomacy and exchanges with scientists allow us to make the right decisions. As policymakers, we must base our decisions on established facts.

Switzerland is firmly convinced of the importance of investing in a well-functioning multilateral system, particularly in an efficient United Nations. Confronted by current challenges, and in the interconnected world that is ours, the notion of "every man for himself" is not a feasible option.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kiska: First, allow me to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency. I am convinced that under your leadership the General Assembly will swiftly and successfully advance its work.

Every minute, as I speak, 12 children die of hunger, and more than 100 are born to extreme poverty. Dozens die from preventable diseases, which we have been able to cure for decades, and it is our responsibility — that of the people in this Hall — to do everything in our powers to help them.

The challenges that we face often do not require difficult strategies or unprecedented amounts of money. They require only our dedication and true leadership, which includes both sides: those who can help give up on ignorance and selfishness and those who receive the help to make the people their first priority.

I therefore want to commend you, Sir, for choosing such a sound focus for this year's session of the General Assembly, namely, on our people and striving for peace and a decent life for all in sustainable conditions. Indeed, there is no bigger responsibility of us as political leaders than to take care of the planet and serve its people. Building safe, healthy, prosperous and just societies for every individual is not a mere ambition. It is our duty. It is the reason that our people entrust us with the power to act on their behalf and to make use of the limited resources that our societies generate.

Our devotion to shared principles, virtuous ambition to keep promises and ability to deliver results are the three most vital components of all respectable public service, and there are no stronger enemies to the effort to make a real difference in the world than egoism, ignorance and narrow-minded national or personal interests. Respect for the principles of peace and security is essential to living in dignity for all our people. Those principles have been at the very core of the Organization since its establishment. The first and the most important responsibility for us as leaders and Members of the United Nations is to adhere to those principles and values, enforce them and punish those who violate them.

Yet far too many people are dying in senseless conflicts or suffering in displacement as a result of the violence. The enormous human tragedies, the material damage caused by armed conflicts, and the refugee crisis deplete much-needed resources that could otherwise go to social and economic development. The bloody reality of our times is a painful reminder of our ignorance and egoism.

Every year after this gathering, we all return to our homes. But there are more than 60 million people who have no such place — people who had to leave everything behind to save their lives and run away from poverty or the horrors of war. Those people do not ask too much. They just want to have a place to live, to raise children, to prosper with their loved ones. We need to make those people feel at home again.

The way we treat our own people is as important to international peace and security as the way we treat each other. Recent findings about the use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime in Syria against his own citizens should alarm us all as much as the

atrocities in Raqqa, Mosul and many other places. All such horrors demonstrate how little respect is being paid to human lives and to the very principle of humanity, especially when power games are played. Our resolve to act when United Nations principles are at stake is often the last hope for those who desperately wait for our help, trapped in the middle of deadly violence in the ruins of what they used to call their homes.

We are witness to short-sighted interests built on spreading instability that are undermining collective efforts to secure peace and security. The very core of the Charter of the United Nations for securing peaceful coexistence among nations is crippled in the name of the selfish pursuits and egoism of the so-called spheres of influence — a fancy phrase too often misused to cover violations of the international order and justify disrespect for sovereignty. It is a dangerous game of tragic outcomes and unintended consequences. We in Europe can see it too: Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova all know the price of peace. They are all aware of the pain resulting from their sovereignty being undermined by an aggressive neighbour — a neighbour that thinks the rules do not apply to it.

We should therefore not be surprised when things get out of control and cause enormous and irreparable damage to people, to countries and to this planet. Today we face one of the worst threats to international peace and security in recent history: North Korea openly threatens our world with nuclear weapons. Such grave disrespect for human life cannot be tolerated. I strongly call on the North Korean regime to terminate its development of weapons of mass destruction and to return to the path of dialogue and building peace on the Korean peninsula.

We need collective resolve in the very spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. The Organization must be firm in its principles and stand for the purpose for which it was created. Some of us have a special responsibility to do so on a regional or international level. There is no room for geopolitical games or economic gains at the expense of our common security. Millions of human lives at stake.

We live in the most prosperous time in the history of humankind. We have all the tools and enough resources to help every human being on this planet live a life in dignity, free from fear or hunger. But there is one challenge that will test all the limits of our ability to lead, act together, adapt and reinvent our societies and the way we live our lives. We are beginning to see and feel the sinister consequences of our actions on the environment. Be it 100-year floods taking place with high frequency, hurricanes that strike harder than before, or devastating droughts that force people to abandon their homes, such disasters are not warnings of future climate change; they are powerful natural events are features of the new environment we live in now.

Last year's adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was an unprecedented demonstration of collective will to address the challenges arising from the climate change our societies must face. It may be remembered as a unique effort of the present generation of humankind to mitigate the consequences of our impact on the environment. It may become our ultimate legacy: a chance for our children to adapt and live happily and safely again in the changed environment.

Our devotion to common principles, our virtue in keeping our promises and our ability to deliver results on this issue is more crucial than ever. No money or short-term economic interests could possibly compensate for the irreparable damage if we fail to act together and change our irresponsible behaviour. The price of such planetary ignorance will be much higher than any we have ever paid.

Slovakia understands the urgency for collective action. We pushed for the swift ratification of the Paris Agreement under our presidency of the European Union last year. I confirm today that we will implement all the national measures necessary to fulfil our obligations, because the Paris Agreement must be implemented in full.

The Organization has served us well for decades. It has faced tough challenges — it excelled in some, it may have failed in others, but it has been the best we have had, with countless successes and well-deserved global authority. There are many pressing issues in today's world that had not been foreseen when the United Nations was created. Who would have imagined that one of the most important topics on the United Nations agenda would be climate change? And yet we demonstrate that we can tackle such challenges. But it would be naive to think that just by applying the same old procedures we can achieve new results and address any new and unforeseen troubles. Just like any other organization, we need to adapt to changes. I strongly believe that we are capable of such adaptation. However, let me emphatically underline that, while we strive for

reform to be more efficient, the very core of the United Nations must be respected without exception.

In order to succeed, all of us will be required to be responsible leaders. We must give up on national egoism and ignorance. We must stand true to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and be honest with each other by keeping the promises that we make and delivering results, both in words and in deeds. That is because there is no more noble task for us than to serve our people and strive to allow them to live in peace, dignity and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Buhari: On behalf of my country, Nigeria, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election, as well as Mr. Guterres on his first General Assembly session as Secretary-General. I want to assure both men of my country's solidarity and cooperation. Indeed, they will need the cooperation of all Member States, since we are meeting during extraordinarily troubled and dangerous times. Let me also thank former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his service to the United Nations and to wish him a peaceful retirement.

We have witnessed many far-reaching developments over the past year. Some of the most significant events in that period include the Iran nuclear deal, the Paris Climate Agreement and the North Korean nuclear crisis, which is of grave concern.

I must also commend the role played by the United Nations in helping with the settlement of thousands of innocent civilians who have been caught up in conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. In particular, we must collectively thank the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the commendable leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, as well as the Governments of Italy, Greece and Turkey, for assisting hundreds of thousands of refugees.

In an exemplary show of solidarity, the international community came together within my own region to assist the countries and communities in the Sahel and the Lake Chad regions to contain the threats posed by Al-Qaida and Boko Haram.

We thank the Security Council for visiting the countries of the Lake Chad basin in order to assess the security situation and humanitarian needs, as well as for pledging assistance to rebuild lives and livelihoods in the region. We in Nigeria are providing relief and humanitarian assistance to millions of internally displaced persons in camps and those afflicted by terrorism, drought, floods and other natural disasters.

Over the past year, the international community came together to focus on the need for gender equality, youth empowerment and social inclusion, as well as the promotion of education, creativity and innovation. The frontiers of good governance, democracy, including holding free and fair elections, and the enthronement of the rule of law are expanding everywhere, especially in Africa.

Our faith in democracy remains firm and unshaken. Our regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States, came together to uphold democratic principles in the Gambia, just as we had done previously in Côte d'Ivoire.

Through our individual national efforts, State institutions are being strengthened in order to promote accountability, combat corruption and recover assets. Those goals can be achieved only through the international community cooperating and providing critical assistance and material support. We shall also cooperate in addressing increasing transnational crime, such as forced labour, modern-day slavery, human trafficking and cybercrime.

Such cooperative efforts should be sustained. We must collectively devise strategies and mobilize the required responses in order to stop fleeing fighters of

the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham from mutating and infiltrating the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin, where there are insufficient resources and a weak response capacity. That will require strong cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the African Union, on conflict prevention and management. The United Nations should continue to take primary leadership in the maintenance of international peace and security by providing, in a predictable and sustainable manner, adequate funding and other enablers to regional initiatives and peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council.

New conflicts should not make us lose sight of ongoing, unresolved old conflicts. For example, several Security Council resolutions from 1967 on the Middle East crisis remain unimplemented. Meanwhile the suffering of the Palestinian people and the blockade of Gaza continue. Additionally, we are now confronted by the desperate human rights and humanitarian situation in Yemen and, most tragically, in Rakhine state in Myanmar. The crisis in Myanmar is very reminiscent of what happened in Bosnia in 1995 and in Rwanda in 1994.

The international community cannot remain silent and not condemn the horrendous suffering caused by what, from all indications, is a State-backed programme of brutal depopulation of the Rohingya-inhabited areas of Myanmar on the basis of ethnicity and religion. We fully endorse the call of the Secretary-General and the Government of Myanmar to order a halt to the ongoing ethnic cleansing and ensure the safe return of the displaced Rohingya to their homes in safety and dignity.

In all of those crises, the primary victims are the people, the most vulnerable of whom are women and children. That is why the theme of this session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is most apposite. While the international community grapples to resolve these conflicts, we must be mindful and focus on the widening inequalities within societies and the gap between the rich and the poor nations. Those inequalities and gaps are part of the underlying root causes of competition for resources, frustration and anger leading to spiralling instability.

The most pressing threat to international peace and security today is the accelerated nuclear weapons development programme of North Korea. Since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, we have never been as close to the threat of nuclear war as we are now. Nigeria proposes a strong United Nations delegation to urgently engage the North Korean leader. The delegation, led by the Security Council, should include members from all regions. The crisis on the Korean peninsula underscores the urgency for all Member States, guided by the spirit of ensuring a safer and more peaceful world, to ratify without delay the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will be open for signature here tomorrow.

I end my remarks by reiterating Nigeria's abiding commitment to the foundational principles and goals of the United Nations. Since our admission as a Member State in 1960, we have always participated in all efforts to bring about global peace, security and development. Nigeria will continue to support the United Nations in all its efforts, including the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zeman: When I was a relatively young man, I was deeply influenced by two books. One of them was *The End of History and the Last Man*, by Francis Fukuyama, and the second was *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, by Samuel Huntington. Fukuyama's book was a description of a brave new world, a new utopia where every country has the same political system based on a liberal parliamentary democracy — a nice dream, but nothing more. As for Huntington, he was realistic and cynical. He simply predicted the gradual emergence of conflicts among various types of civilizations. By the

way, in one of his articles in *Foreign Affairs*, he also speaks about the bloody borders of Islam.

So, now we have a new type of civilization — I should call it anti-civilization — which has emerged over the past two or three decades. The typical feature of that civilization is the fact that it is based on terror and nothing more. We see those terrorist actions all over Europe and beyond. We convey our condolences, we express our solidarity with the victims of terrorist actions, we organize protests and demonstrations, but unfortunately we still hesitate to fight against that terrorist anti-civilization with our full power. I must admit that one year ago, I criticized the United Nations here (see A/71/PV.12) for its inability to define the word "terrorism".

The situation has changed. For 70 years, we have not been able to define the word "terrorism". On the other hand, I highly appreciate the action of the Secretary-General and the recent creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which is a reasonable step towards a practical solution to the fight against world terrorism. The Assembly must know that there are 38 — I repeat, 38 — anti-terrorist organizations and institutions under the umbrella of the United Nations. Thirty-eight — good heavens! I believe that the more such institutions we create, the more terrorist movements are able to flourish. What we need is a single, strong office to fight terrorism, equipped with all the necessary measures, including military force, to fight terrorism and based on Article 47 of the Charter of the United Nations. I appreciate the nomination of Mr. Voronkov, whom I met yesterday. I am sure he will be able to solve the problems contributing to worldwide Islamic terrorism.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let me address the other side of the coin — migration. Migration is partly provoked by terrorist actions, as seen in Syria and Iraq. On the other hand, migration is also connected with terrorism because some jihadists pose as migrants. In Europe and elsewhere, they create sleeper cells, encourage lone wolves and so on. I understand those who say that we must welcome migrants, but my opposition arises from the fact that massive migration from African and other countries represents a brain drain. The young, healthy people — mainly male — who leave their countries represent a weakening of the potential of those countries. Everybody who welcomes migrants in Europe agrees that the brain drain exists and that it contributes to the continuing backwardness of those countries. What we need to do is help such countries by providing electricity, hospitals, schools and water resources in order to stabilize the domestic population, but not to support migration.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the war against terrorism must be based on historical optimism and the belief that we shall overcome someday. In Barcelona, Spanish people said that they were not afraid, and Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed the need to live free from fear. That is why I should like to quote a sentence from Martin Luther that I believe most beautifully expresses historical optimism: "If I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree".

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Czech Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.4

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

4th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 19 September 2017, 12.05 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Address by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: The seventy-second regular session of the General Assembly is being convened at a time of historic transition in Liberia and during a period of acute challenges to the global order. Today we face the threat of climate change, the violence of terrorism, the risks and indignaty of migration and a nuclear escalation on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, there is a race against time to accommodate a restless, youthful population in search of opportunity and a brighter future.

I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his election. His progressive and creative leadership assures us of his commitment and his action to reform the United Nations for increased efficiency, better coordination and gender parity by 2021 at the senior leadership level. My delegation is also pleased with the initial steps taken towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I also wish to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. His vast experience and strong diplomatic skills assure us that he will steer the affairs of this session in an effective manner. The Liberian delegation offers him its full cooperation and support.

I would also like to recognize Mr. Peter Thompson of Fiji for his stewardship over the past year, which saw the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the successful conduct of the first Ocean Conference.

Our theme this year is "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", which aptly captures a universal aspiration. I hope that, at the conclusion of our deliberations, we will forge a consensus and renew our commitment as leaders to transform the lives of our peoples and meet our responsibilities to our planet. The work of the United Nations has never been more important to the search for peace and sustenance for global stability than it is today.

By its Charter and its purposes, the United Nations continues to represent the genius of our collective ability to live together in peace and harmony. It still offers great hope to a troubled world. Liberians bear

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witness to this truth and remain grateful to the United Nations, and all of its organs and agencies, for the critical security interventions and continued support for Liberia's recovery and democratic aspirations.

Eleven years ago, in September 2006, I stood before the Assembly (see A/61/PV.11) as the newly elected President of the Republic of Liberia and the first woman to be democratically elected as a Head of State on the African continent. When I speak to women in Africa and across the world, I am humbled by the inspiration drawn from my experience. The next generation must belong to women.

Today I address the Assembly for the last time as I bring my two terms of elected office to a close. Liberia is just 22 days away from historic legislative and presidential elections. It will mark the first time in 73 years that political power will be handed over peacefully and democratically from one elected leader to another. That will pave the way for the next generation of Liberians to lead the country into the future.

The election will signal the irreversible course that Liberia has embarked upon to consolidate its young, post-conflict democracy. Democracy is on the march in Liberia and, I believe, on an irreversible path forward on the African continent. I thank all our partners who have made meaningful contributions — financial and in kind — to ensure peaceful elections, and those organizations that will deploy observer missions to attest to the integrity of the election process.

I assumed office after 25 years of development reversal, which was further compounded by a 15-year civil war. We have made great progress and laid the foundation for the next democratic Government. We have reshaped the armed forces of Liberia and the Liberia national police and have professionalized our customs and immigration services and the small Liberian coast guard. We are proud to report that, since the formal turnover of security responsibilities to our Government, Liberia has remained stable, peaceful and secure.

We transformed the economy from a growth rate of less than zero to more than 8.7 per cent in 2013, until the health crisis and plummeting commodity prices brought a downturn to our economic recovery. Liberia has adjusted. We are resilient, and we embrace diversification. Our focus today is on strengthening the agriculture sector for value-addition and infrastructure development, with emphasis on roads and energy industrialization.

Previously dysfunctional public institutions now have the capacity to respond to the needs of our citizens through decentralized county service centres, with ownership by strong local Governments. And from the tragedy of the health crisis, we are strengthening our health-care systems, prioritizing prevention and delivering capacity at the community level. The impact is being felt. Life expectancy progressed from a low 47 years to a hopeful 62 years, with a reduction in maternal deaths from 1,400 to 1,100 — an annual rate of reduction of 3.4 per cent. The poverty rate has decreased from 63.8 per cent in 2067 to 50.9 per cent in 2016.

Infrastructure has been repaired and restored, and we continue to rehabilitate damaged roads and construct new ones. Cities and towns are bustling with new life, thanks to the increasing provision of electricity, potable water and technology. It is now possible to receive voice and data on phones and mobile devices from virtually everywhere in the country, at competitively low prices.

Liberia has enjoyed the benefit of multilateralism through the full support provided by the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). From being a pariah State, Liberia has gradually regained the confidence of nations and has even risen to assume leadership roles in regional bodies — specifically of ECOWAS and the Mano River Union.

I was personally privileged to play a role in the formulation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as co-Chair of former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and to help frame the African common position as Chair of the African Union high-level committee.

There is so much more to share about Liberia's post-conflict transformation — how we have empowered ordinary citizens and a shared sense of citizenship, giving women, including market and rural women, a voice and the right to be heard. We have continued to transform the health-care and education systems, engender the entrepreneurial spirit in our youth, our vibrant media and our civil society. We are establishing cross-border development corridors to enhance regional trade, and we are strengthening the rule of law to tackle systemic undermining of integrity.

Liberia is experiencing the birth of a post-conflict artistic community in song, hip-hop, painting, poetry, storytelling and fashion.

Liberia has come a long way. We could not have accomplished all of that without the Organization — its political leadership, the generosity of its economic development support, humanitarian contributions and, most important, the stabilization and security provided to our country through the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I applaud you, Mr. President, and your predecessors, the Member States and United Nations civil servants around the world who have sacrificed in order for us to see the very first generation of school-age children growing up in an environment of peace, free of the violence of civil conflict. Liberia's transformation was powered by a world community that made a shared commitment to deliver peace to a country and a subregion beset by civil conflict and cross-border destabilization. The United Nations and its partner nations were of one mind, and from that global unity a new democratic Liberian State was born. Liberia is a post-conflict success story. It is the Organization's post-conflict success story.

As I bid farewell to the Assembly today, and to my fellow Heads of State, I have a few parting thoughts.

First, remember Liberia, which is making vibrant efforts to apply the tenets of democracy. Consider the lives saved, the wealth created, the stability assured because this global body led at a time of great uncertainty in our subregion and around the world. I ask the States Members of the United Nations to continue to lead, to spread the values of democracy, human rights and good governance, while strengthening solidarity for economic transformation and social resilience. It is often in times of transition that great leaders emerge and institutions are strengthened.

Secondly, I recall that two years ago, at its seventieth session, the Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Goals that encapsulate the aspirations of Member States to eradicate poverty and reduce, if not eliminate, inequalities within and between countries. Our commitment to achieving the Goals must be unwavering, because progress in that area is inextricably linked to ending conflict and sustaining peace.

Thirdly, real progress remains elusive in the lingering effort to reform the Security Council and make it more responsive to current global realities. The call for that reform must be pursued more robustly towards an early conclusion. Africa's views are well articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus. Today African nations are participating in strong regional and subregional bodies, which are evolving — adopting measures to secure and preserve peace and security, while strengthening economic integration.

The United Nations, as the pre-eminent world body, must also continue to evolve to more effectively serve the common interests of all Member States. It must continue to chart the way forward. In its capable hands rest the hope and aspirations for a more just, peaceful and humane world, for the sake of our people and our planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Macron (*spoke in French*): I am privileged to address the General Assembly, and I know to whom I owe this privilege. I owe it to all those who, just over 70 years ago, rose up against a barbaric regime that had seized my country, France. I owe it to the nations that heard the cry of those who resisted and that from the Americas, Africa, Oceania and Asia sent their sons and daughters to France to help. Not all of them were familiar with France, but they knew that

France's defeat would also mean the defeat of the ideals they shared. They were proud of those ideals and were prepared to die to uphold them. They knew that their freedom and values were dependent upon the freedom of other men and other women living thousands of kilometres from them.

I owe the privilege to those who, once the war had ended, dared to attempt reconciliation and built a new international order. I owe it to people who, like René Cassin, understood that human rights were at the very core of international legitimacy. I owe it to people who brought the guilty to justice, tended to the victims and rectified mistakes. I owe it to those who believed that the values that the war had trampled must be restored to their rightful place.

Tolerance, freedom and humanity are the values on which the United Nations was built. And it was not because those values were beautiful but rather because they were just and made it possible to avoid the worst.

I do not speak of all this merely to talk about history, but because today I hear several of our colleagues talking about the future of our world, and forgetting somewhat where we have come from. What might seem exotic and far removed from our immediate interests is perhaps what determines and will determine most what lies ahead for us.

My country might have a unique place in the international order, but that means that it is also indebted to all those whose voices have gone unheard. I know that the duty of France is to speak for those whose voices are not heard. If we speak for them, we also speak for ourselves — now and for the future. Today I would like to speak for those forgotten voices.

I have heard Bana, who lives in Aleppo and whose voice I want to bring here. She has lived under the horror of bombings, of police and militia. She has lived in refugee camps. The Syrian people have suffered enough for the international community to acknowledge its collective failure and to question its methods.

To achieve just and lasting peace, we must focus urgently on a political settlement to the crisis by way of a transition, as the Security Council has called for through its unanimous adoption of resolution 2254 (2015). France and its partners have taken the initiative to support the efforts of the United Nations and to design, finally, an inclusive political road map for Syria. That is why I hope that we can establish a contact group made up of all of the five permanent members of the Security Council and relevant stakeholders.

The so-called Astana process can be useful, but it is not enough, and the past few days have revealed many problems. We have to give ourselves the resources we really need to begin negotiations, because the solution will ultimately be a political rather than a military one. It is in the interests of all of us and, of course, in Syrians' interests above all.

In that context, I have already stated what our two red lines are. First, France will not waver where the use of chemical weapons is concerned. The perpetrators of the attack of 4 April must be brought to international justice, and that must never happen again. Secondly, it is absolutely crucial to ensure access to health care for all men and women and enable medical facilities to protect civilians. France will make this one of the priorities of its presidency of the Security Council next month.

When we act to achieve peace in Syria we are acting for the Syrian people, but we are also doing it to protect all of us against Islamist terrorism, because what we are primarily fighting in Syria and in Iraq is terrorism. We are acting for all who perished in attacks in recent months, because jihadi terrorism has struck our fellow citizens across all continents, regardless of religion. We must therefore protect ourselves by joining forces, and security must become our first priority. That is the focus of the initiatives that France has launched for combating terrorists' use of the Internet and all their financing sources. That is why I hope we can organize a conference in 2018 on this effort, which I urge everyone here to become involved in. It is also the focus of the military action that France has undertaken as part of the coalition in Syria and Iraq, in accordance with international law. We are fighting terrorism not only on the military and diplomatic fronts but on the educational, cultural and moral fronts, too. It is part of our efforts in Asia as well as in the Middle East and Africa. And it must bring all of us together.

I have listened to Ousman, a schoolboy in Gao, and I would like to bring his voice in here today. Ousman is growing up in Mali under constant threat from indiscriminate attacks, and yet his only dream is to be able to go to school without risking his life. We are now all engaged in the Sahel — the United Nations, the countries of the region that are participating in the United Nations Multidimensional

Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Force conjointe du G5 Sahel, and the European Union and its member States. And I would like to pay tribute to all stakeholders by acknowledging that it is an extremely difficult challenge with a high cost in human lives. Our challenge there is, again, eliminating terrorism and, in order to do that, building national capacities so that States can take charge of their security themselves. Regardless of the resources we put there, our collective effort will not succeed if the countries that are most affected are unable to take on their own responsibilities in that regard.

That is why I have supported the deployment of the Force conjointe du G5 Sahel since my first day in office, and I urge everyone here to mobilize collectively to that end, too. This is also why I want to invest in strengthening our support to African peacekeeping missions, because that is the future. We must all give new thought to the links between peacekeeping, regional organizations and host countries. Our capacity to respond to our peoples' aspirations for peace depends on it. Certainly, a military response can never be the only response. Here I would like to emphasize the importance of a political response, and in that regard I have in mind the implementation of the Algiers Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and our development policy.

I have also listened to Kouamé, and I want to bring his voice in here today. Left on the roadside, he crossed Africa before putting his fate in the hands of smugglers in Libya. He crossed the Mediterranean and came safely to port when so many others perished at sea. The refugee, the displaced person and the person to whom we give the sad name of migrant has truly become the symbol of our age, of a world where we will never be able to halt the march of despair if we cannot turn the roads of necessity into roads of liberty. Such migrations are the result of politics, climate change or ethnic conflict. They are always the roads taken by necessity. Today necessity is a flight from the persecution of which the Rohingya — more than 400,000 refugees, most of them children — are victims. The military operations there must cease, access to humanitarian aid must be provided and the rule of law must be re-established because, as we know, what is going on is ethnic cleansing. France will take the initiative on this issue in the Security Council.

Necessity means leaving to save one's family when war is raging and when international humanitarian law is no longer respected but becomes a tool to be exploited in the warring parties' strategy of violence, as it is in Syria. It means exile when the defenders of freedom are the first to be targeted by the powers that be. Protecting refugees is a moral and political duty and one in which France is resolved to play its part, by supporting the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees wherever he has to intervene; by opening legal paths to resettlement in areas closest to the conflict zones in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey as well as in the Niger and Chad; and by defending the right to asylum and unequivocal respect for the Geneva Conventions.

In Paris on 28 August, we brought together the African and European countries that have been most directly affected by the migration flows along the central Mediterranean route. We adopted a road map whose priority is combating the smugglers who traffic in despair. We must put an end to these intolerable violations of fundamental human rights by working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration to establish a humanitarian infrastructure and by helping countries of origin and transit to better control migration flows.

But while short-term responses are a necessity for managing crises when we are dealing with terrorism and migration, what is at stake today is our ability to muster the political will to address the underlying causes of these sources of instability. Migration and terrorism represent the biggest political challenges that all of us may ever face. If we are to overcome such moral and civilizational challenges, it will be by pursuing a true policy of development, which is why I have decided that France should play its part by devoting 0.55 per cent of national revenue to public development aid for the next five years.

The President took the Chair.

I am grateful for the applause, but I have to temper it somewhat — first, because I know that some people were expecting more, that such aid is never enough, and that France's response is still not enough, but mainly because it is not money that is the real issue; it is how effectively that money is used. It is what we spend the money on. It is about how we can be better at evaluating and taking responsibility for the money that we all contribute. Of course, I want France to do its part with development aid, but what I really want is for us to bring more innovation and intelligence to

our aid, using different methods and taking on greater responsibility on the ground. That is what I want. The challenge we have today is in ensuring that development aid actually reaches the areas where it is needed, simply and efficiently, calculated correctly and for the purpose it was designed for. That was what we wanted to do with the Alliance for the Sahel, for example, which we launched with the European Union, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.

We also have to set clear priorities. The first is investing in education, because it is education that will help us win the fight against the obscurantism that is bringing down entire countries and regions today, both in Africa and the Middle East. I urge the international community to step up in February 2018 in Dakar when we re-establish the World Partnership for Education, which France will co-chair with Senegal. This is a key struggle for us all. We must give girls and boys the opportunity to escape obscurantism and to choose their own future, not the future imposed upon them or the one that we in this Hall would choose for them.

Our second priority is to invest in health and combat major pandemics and malnutrition, because without education or health there can be no hope. In this fight for development, we must also support the role of women, culture and freedom of expression. Wherever the role of women is undermined, there, too, development is undermined, as is a society's ability to assume its rightful place in the world. These are not trivial issues; this is a deep-seated civilizational struggle. It is our struggle and these are our values, which are not relative but universal on all continents and at all latitudes. Wherever culture is undermined, there, too, our collective ability to rise to challenges is undermined.

That is why UNESCO is today such an important organization and has such a key role to play with respect to ensuring a human face for the world at a time when widespread obscurantism seeks to eradicate its unbelievable diversity. We are fighting so that all cultures and languages can be preserved and so that progress can continue to be made.

Freedom of expression, too, is a most urgent issue. The United Nations must protect the freedom of those who think, reflect and express themselves, in particular the freedom of the press. For that reason, I call for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the protection of journalists throughout the world; neither the fight against terrorism nor the more demanding world we are living in can justify any inroads upon that freedom.

Finally, I wish to speak on behalf of my fellow Frenchman Jules, who lives on the island of St. Martin. I am thinking of his house, which lies in ruins, and of his fear that this may happen again because of climate change, which is leading to an increasing number of disasters. The future of the world is that of our planet, which is now taking revenge for the folly of humankind. Nature is calling us to task to shoulder our responsibility of humanity and solidarity. It will not negotiate with us, and humankind must defend itself by protecting it. Extreme weather events are exploding the traditional differences between the North and the South. The most fragile are always the principal victims, swept up in a whirlwind of injustice. We are all affected by climatic changes, from China to the Caribbean, in Russia and in the Horn of Africa.

My country promised, before the Assembly, that we would achieve a universal agreement in Paris. That we did and signed it in this very Hall. That agreement is not up for renegotiation. It binds us and rallies us together. To take it apart would mean unraveling a pact not just between States but also between generations. It can be improved; we can have new contributions and fresh input, but we will not backtrack.

I fully respect the decision of the United States. The door will always be open to it. However, we will continue our work, along with all Governments, local governments, cities, businesses, non-governmental organizations and citizens of the world. We have the strength of pioneers, endurance and the certainty and energy of those who wish to build a better world. That better world will lead to innovation and job creation, despite the beliefs of those who see the future only in terms of the past.

We will build such a world right now by making our national contributions, as France has done by adopting its climate plan, which places us on the road to carbon neutrality. On 12 December, we will be meeting in Paris with those who wish to move forward with real solutions by mobilizing public and private funding. Here I confirm that France will play its full role in this respect by allocating €5 billion per year to climate action between now and 2020.

Our unfolding ambition is reflected in the fact that this very afternoon we will be introducing a global pact

for the environment aimed at shaping international law for the coming century, with the support of the United Nations agencies.

At a time when some would wish us to stop, we must continue to advance, because climate change and extreme weather events will not stop. Our duty of solidarity and humanity will continue.

Behind every one of our decisions are the voices and lives of the invisible masses whom we must defend, because we in turn were defended in the past. Why do we not heed those voices? Why are we not focusing on what 70 years ago gave humankind the strength to believe in itself: planetary responsibility, the desire for mutual assistance and faith in progress?

When I speak of Bana, Ousman, Kouamé and Jules, I speak about all my compatriots and everyone else's compatriots, because our security is their security. We are inextricably linked in a community of fate, today and tomorrow. Global balances have changed radically in recent years and the world has become multipolar once again, so we must learn anew the complexity of dialogue as well as the riches it can bring to us.

Our collective action is coming up against obstacles stemming from State instability. In Libya, six years after the military intervention there, I acknowledge, before the Assembly, France's particular responsibility to ensure that the country regains its stability. The meeting held in La Celle-Saint-Cloud on 25 July enabled us to make progress on the reconciliation necessary for the success of the political process under the auspices of the United Nations. Together with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, we must succeed in 2018 in organizing elections that will mark the restoration of effective State authority. I will do my utmost to achieve that.

Concerning Venezuela, collective action must enable the upholding of democracy and respect for all political movements. We must give no ground to the dictatorial trends that we see today. In Ukraine, too, we must tirelessly work to ensure the upholding of the commitments undertaken, bring about an effective ceasefire and work together with our partners, particularly Germany, to ensure that the parties to the conflict respect international law and end the conflict.

Multilateralism is facing the challenge of nuclear proliferation, unable to ward off threats that we believed to be past but that have re-emerged today. Pyongyang has crossed a major threshold in terms of military escalation. This is an urgent, collective existential threat. North Korea has not to date given any sign of wishing to negotiate. Its authorities are determined to raise the stakes. Our responsibility, together with all of our partners, including China and Russia, is, through resolve, to bring North Korea to the negotiating table for a political settlement to this conflict. France rejects escalation and will not close any door to dialogue, provided that the conditions are met for such a dialogue to promote peace.

It is that same goal that impels me to defend the nuclear agreement with Iran. Our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation enabled us to reach a solid, robust and verifiable agreement on 14 July 2015 and to ensure that Iran will not be able to acquire nuclear weapons. To denounce that now without proposing anything in its place would be a serious mistake, and failing to uphold it would be irresponsible, because it is a helpful agreement that is vital to keeping the peace at a time when the risk of a collapse into a death spiral is genuine. That is what I told the United States and Iran yesterday. For my part, I hope that we will be able to fulfil the agreement, by working to contain Iran's ballistic activity and manage the situation after 2020, which the 2015 agreement does not cover. Let us by all means be more demanding, but certainly not by unwinding the results that previous agreements have already achieved. Look at the mess we are in today. Has the lack of dialogue done anything to contain the situation in North Korea for even a moment? What I want for all of us is a world where dialogue, controls and multilateralism provide us with effective, useful weapons.

I do not know whether, 70 years from now, a future successor of mine will have the privilege of addressing the Assembly. Will multilateralism survive the time of doubt and change that we are going through? The fact is that we should be remembering the state that the world was in 70 years ago, shattered by war and stunned by genocides. Right now we need to rediscover the optimism, ambition and courage with which we met those reasons to doubt and the faith in what unites us. We must restore our trust in the universal founding principles of the United Nations, which protect all of us and guarantee our dignity, all over the world.

But why have we ended up where we are? Because we have allowed the idea to take root that multilateralism is a kind of convenient game for diplomats around a table,

a tool of the weak. That has gone on for years, because we let ourselves believe that our efforts were stronger and more convincing when we acted unilaterally. But it is not true. Because, sometimes out of cynicism, we let ourselves believe that multilateralism could not fix everything, and so we let deregulation of the world take over. We have been slow to address climate change and the new inequalities that unregulated capitalism creates. We have let the voices of discord shout the loudest. And in that game, the loudest voices win. Time and fading memory have made us forget the history that moulded us and allowed the belief to take root that we are stronger without multilateralism. The challenge that our generation faces today is to be able to get our faith back and to show that in today's world, nothing is more effective than multilateralism. And why? Because every one of our challenges is global — terrorism, immigration, climate change, the regulation of the digital world. They all have to be addressed multilaterally and on a global scale.

Every time we turn away from multilateralism, the loudest voice wins. But it is only through multilateralism that we can achieve our vision of the world, because it is universal, not regional. Every time we give up on an idea — for example, that the situation of women concerns some people in parts of the world but not others, or that equality is an issue for one civilization but not others — we are abandoning the universality of the values that have brought us together in this Organization. In some countries we have already ceded the race to the strong. And that is because, every time, the great Powers, seated around the Security Council table, have ceded the race to the strong and to unilateralism, and have failed to live up to agreements they signed themselves. They have failed to uphold the glue that keeps multilateralism together — the rule of law. That is what has got us this far and can build sustainable peace.

Today we need multilateralism more than ever, not because it is a comforting notion, and not because it is somewhere for thinking people to take shelter, but because it is about the rule of law, about interaction between peoples and about equality for us all. It is what will enable us to achieve peace and overcome our challenges. And the United Nations is indeed the Organization that can act in full legitimacy to preserve global equilibrium. That is why I want a more responsible, effective and agile United Nations, and why I fully support the Secretary-General's plans for the Organization and his ambition and commitment to making it equal to the challenges facing our world. We need to get out of our offices and away from meetings with States and Governments and to seek new resources, so that we can see the world as it really is and reconsider some of the dogmas to which we have sometimes clung. We need a Security Council that can make effective decisions, without walling itself off through its right to the veto when mass atrocities are being committed. We need better representation for everyone here and for every continent. We need to coordinate crisis management better with the European Union, the African Union and the key subregional organizations. That is why France will stand beside the United Nations as it implements reform.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it is only in a stronghold such as this that the forgotten voices that I wanted to bring here today can be heard, a stronghold where there is a place for everyone and where everyone can be heard even by those who do not wish to hear. To them I say that a refusal to listen to the oppressed, to victims, allows their miseries to grow and prosper until the day when they overwhelm all the rest of us as well. A refusal to listen means forgetting that at one time or another in our history, we were the oppressed, and others heard our voices. It means forgetting that our safety and security is theirs too, that their lives are connected to ours, and we cannot remain unscathed in a world that is going up in flames. A refusal to listen to those who call for help means believing that walls and borders will protect us.

But it is not walls that protect us, it is our willingness to act and to change the course of history and our refusal to allow history to be written without us even as we imagine we are safe. It is our sovereignty and our sovereign use of force in the service of progress that protects us. A nation's independence lies in its interdependence. A refusal to listen to those voices would mean believing that their despair is not ours, that we will always enjoy benefits that they can only dream of. But what if those benefits are our whole planet — what if they are peace, justice and freedom? Do we believe that we are the only ones who should enjoy them, tucked away in some corner? If we do not defend those shared benefits, we will all be doomed. We will be watching fires burn that history will blow back on our own children tomorrow.

Today, more than ever, those shared benefits, our common goods, represent our shared interests.

Our security is their security, and there are no sides, no division between those who believe in the rule of law and multilateralism and those who believe in a pragmatic unilateralism. That is a false notion. Our real effectiveness is playing out in this struggle right here. That is why I want to join with everyone here today, united in a belief in a strong, responsible multilateralism. That is our generation's responsibility, if we do not want to abandon ourselves to fatalism. There is only one kind of courage we need, which is to listen to those voices and not to deviate from the mark we wish to leave on history. We must be constantly aware that we must work to reconcile our interests and our values. Our security is the common good of our planet. Our generation has no choice. It must speak for today and for tomorrow.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): This is the eighth and last time I address the General Assembly in my capacity as President of Colombia. A lot has happened since 24 September 2010, when I made my first speech (see A/65/PV.15). Colombia has been transformed positively, and the world has experienced progress and setbacks, of which we have all been witnesses, victims or protagonists.

Here is a paradox: I did my first televised address to Colombians as their leader from New York in September 2010, one day before addressing the Assembly. What was the reason for that intervention? I announced to Colombia and to the international community that our armed forces had taken down the head of the guerrillas of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Today, seven years later, I feel very happy that the news I bring from Colombia does not have to do with death, but with life. Today I come to tell the Assembly that the peace process with the FARC culminated not only in an agreement, but with something bigger and more important: thousands and thousands of human lives saved.

Therefore, the news today is not about death. It is about life, and we want that to be the news in the whole world. If in Colombia we were able to end an armed conflict that left hundreds of thousands dead and millions as victims and displaced persons, there is hope for the conflicts that still exist in the world. It was not easy. Ending a war, overcoming hatred and vanquishing fears involve a complex process of dialogue and compromise. However, we did it because we had the will and because we were aware of a fundamental premise: peace is a necessary condition for progress and the happiness of any society.

I want to acknowledge and thank the United Nations, because it has fully fulfilled the mission for which it was created, which is none other than to end the scourge of war. On behalf of some 50 million Colombians, I want to thank the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the Assembly.

A special mission set up by the Security Council was in charge of verifying and monitoring the FARC disarmament process and its compliance with the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities between that group and the Colombian State. Today we can say, with immense satisfaction, that its mission has been fulfilled. The ceasefire and cessation of hostilities were respected, and the FARC delivered to the United Nations more than 9,000 weapons that were stored in containers. Those weapons are being destroyed. The members of that former guerrilla group — without detriment to their responsibilities with regard to justice and to the victims — have now formed a political movement to defend their ideas and proposals in the forums of democracy.

That is what a peace process is all about: replacing violence with reasoning, exchanging bullets for votes. Never again will arms be used as a means of political pressure. Now we are faced with the challenge of

implementing what has been agreed and guaranteeing victims' rights to truth, justice, reparations and non-repetition.

Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In that regard, we can once again count on the friendly hand of the United Nations. In a few days, a second mission, authorized last week by the Security Council, will begin operations in our country. It will accompany the reintegration of guerrillas into civilian life and will help us to verify the safety of ex-combatants and the communities that have suffered from the armed conflict. And something very important: the United Nations will also verify compliance with the ceasefire and the temporary cessation of hostilities, which will begin 1 October, by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, the other guerrilla group with which we are in negotiations to achieve a complete peace.

Building peace is a long process with political, economic and social dimensions. It is a process in which, fortunately, we have already had positive results. With innovative programmes in education, health, housing and infrastructure, we are beginning to close the deep social gaps of our society.

The Economic Commission for Latin America has highlighted Colombia's progress in reducing poverty and indigence. In seven years, more than 5 million Colombians overcame poverty — that is more than a tenth of our population. We have turned health into a fundamental right, and education has been our highest budgetary priority for the past four years, above security and defence. International organizations also highlight the soundness of our economic and social indicators in the face of fluctuations in the global economy.

This is indeed a special moment for Colombia, and a special moment for the United Nations, which is successfully fulfilling, in our country, its main objective.

But this time of hope in Colombia does not prevent us from viewing with concern the difficult situations for peace and democracy in other parts of the planet. We emphatically deplore and condemn the ballistic-missile launches and the nuclear tests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Those actions are a threat to international peace and security.

We are very concerned about the precarious situation in our sister and neighbour Republic of Venezuela, with which we share an immense border, a common history and human ties that do not allow us to be indifferent to its fate. Venezuela pains us. We are pained at the gradual destruction of its democracy. We are pained at the persecution of the political opposition and the systematic violation of the rights of Venezuelans. Today I repeat my call on the Secretary-General and the entire international community to support the Venezuelan people in the search for a peaceful solution that will return them to the path of progress, democracy and freedom.

We are also pained at the terrorist attacks carried out by intolerant fanatics, sowing fear and pain, and we condemn them. On that topic I would like to speak in two capacities: as President of the only country where instead of increasing weaponry we melt them to build monuments to harmony, and as the most recent Nobel Peace Prize recipient.

Beyond the differences of race, religion and thought, human beings are actually one. What happens to one happens to us all. We have to understand that beyond divisions, beyond borders, our people is called the world. Our race is called humankind. We must understand this truth if we are to respect one another and respect life.

We must fight terrorism forcefully — with military and police power, with intelligence and international cooperation. But we must also eradicate its roots, which are fear, exclusion and hatred, with the positive forces of love, compassion and respect for differences. In Colombia we are proving that it is possible: war can be overcome. Ancient enemies can speak and work together for a greater cause. If we are succeeding in Colombia, it can be done all over the world.

I cannot conclude without addressing an issue that I have highlighted before at this rostrum: the world drug problem. I have said many times that the war on drugs has not been won and is not being won, that we need new approaches and new strategies.

At the General Assembly's thirtieth special session, on the world drug problem — which met last year at the initiative of Colombia — there was progress, such as the call for States to protect human rights in their drug policies. But we still have a great deal to do. We must reach consensus on central issues, such as not criminalizing addicts and understanding drug use as a matter of public health and not criminal policy.

The war on drugs has claimed too many lives. We in Colombia have paid a very high price, perhaps

the highest of any nation, and what we are seeing is that the remedy is often worse than the disease. Let us undertake a serious and rigorous follow-up of the regulatory experiences that have been implemented in different places and learn from both their successes and their difficulties.

It is time to accept realistically that as long as there is consumption there will be supply, and that consumption will not end. It is not a simplistic matter of pointing out who is solely responsible. We all are, under the principle of the common and shared responsibility that we assumed several decades ago. It is time to talk about responsible regulation by States, to seek ways to weaken the mafias and to confront consumption with more resources for prevention, care and reduction of damage to health and to the social fabric. Colombia will continue to fight this scourge decisively. For us it has been and continues to be a matter of national security.

Peace has allowed us for the first time to initiate the process of voluntary substitution of coca crops. Those processes, along with the forced eradication we are promoting and the seizures, which have increased to unprecedented levels, will allow us to achieve results that are even more conclusive and long-term. But we must advance in this struggle with a more open mind. We have to be smarter and more innovative.

We can say much the same about climate change. Colombia, the most biodiverse country in the world for its size, is also one of the most vulnerable to climate change. That is why we have been proactive on this matter. At the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development we pushed for the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, which the Assembly approved in 2015. Today we are pleased to see that those Goals are the backbone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promoted by the United Nations.

We also enthusiastically support the Paris Climate Agreement, whose goals are a national commitment and should be for all if we want to preserve our common home — the Earth. Humankind cannot close its eyes in the face of the most pressing challenge of our times.

In this, my last statement before the General Assembly, I want to offer the world — with humility and much gratitude — the example and model of peace that we are beginning to build in Colombia. And I want to reiterate our gratitude for the international community's generous support.

With the strength of love we can overcome fear. With the strength of life we can overcome the tyranny of violence and death. With the strength of unity we can make the world a decent place to live.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rahmon (*spoke in Tajik; English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to join my colleagues, Heads of State and Government, in congratulating Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and to wish him every success in his noble duties. I also express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Peter Thomson for his continued support of Tajikistan's national and international commitments during his term as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Unprecedented rapid globalization over the past decades has contributed to the development of political and economic relationships among countries and helped bolster the integration of various regions across the world. It has also brought massive challenges to the world's people and sometimes undermines the efforts of Member States to ensure a safe, fair and secure life for their people. In this context, the United Nations, as a universal institution, should continue to carry out its noble mission of coordinating the efforts of Member States to strengthen countries' resilience in responding to modern threats and challenges.

It is impossible to address the new challenges facing the international community without strengthening and reforming the entire United Nation system. Comprehensive and inclusive reform of the United Nations must contribute to increasing and strengthening its capacity to respond to developments around the world in a timely manner and to deal with today's threats and risks. United Nations reform should be implemented in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. We support the inclusive and equal representation of the interests of developing countries in the Security Council reform process.

We are witnessing today many tragic and horrific events taking place across the globe that undermine the international community's commitment to attaining comprehensive sustainable development. The spread of terrorism and extremism, religious armed conflicts, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking pose serious challenges to the security of our countries.

As terrorist and extremist groups and movements flourish in many hot spots throughout the world, threatening people's security by using certain corners of the world as safe havens, I wish to reiterate that the horror and brutal acts of these forces have absolutely no connection with the holy religion of Islam. On the contrary, they run counter to the moral teachings and do not reflect the tolerance and values of Islam. In order to confront these threats, all Member States must make every effort, in accordance with international law, and avoid double standards.

The Government of Tajikistan continues to take concrete steps to address threats and challenges and to ensure lasting peace and overall stability in the country, in cooperation with its partners and international organizations, in particular the relevant United Nations agencies. The implementation of the second phase of our National Strategy on Countering Extremism and Terrorism 2016-2020 is one effective instrument we use to fulfil our commitments. I should emphasize that these efforts are aimed at supporting the United Nations central coordinating role in assisting countries in post-conflict rehabilitation processes.

The success of our joint actions to prevent and resolve conflict and to seek the peaceful settlement of disputes will depend first and foremost on how effectively we use preventive diplomacy and mediation. Peace and stability can ensure sustainable, inclusive cooperation aimed at resolving the conflict in North Korea. Peace and stability can ensure sustainable social and economic development and a more peaceful life, and create conditions conducive to a strong civil society and to respect for and the protection of human rights in all countries, facilitating the prosperity of Member States.

We Tajiks are well aware of the importance of peace and the need to defend it, since our people have experienced many hardships and suffered through a civil war in the early days of its independence. As a result of the domestic conflict imposed upon them, thousands of our nationals lost their lives. Only through peace and stability have we been able to achieve sustainable economic development, reduce poverty and improve our people's well-being, promote cooperation with different countries and goodwill among nations throughout the world, and take the measures necessary to ensure regional integration.

We cannot afford to remain silent in the face of the military, political, social and economic situation in neighbouring Afghanistan. The rapidly growing activity of violent terrorist groups in the country has become a source of serious concern for us. Given the current situation in that country, it is high time to take strong measures to coordinate counter-terrorism efforts and tackle drug production and trafficking in narcotics.

Tajikistan supports Afghanistan's comprehensive conflict resolution strategy. The Government and the people of Afghanistan need timely support and targeted assistance, especially during the current transition period. Tajikistan's involvement in the process of regional integration through enhanced economic and trade relations with that country could be an important element in helping the country move forward towards peace and stability. We call on the international community to stand with and contribute to helping Afghanistan restore its ailing social and economic life and to develop its transport and communication infrastructure.

Tajikistan, which has 1,400 kilometres of border with Afghanistan, stands ready and committed to contribute to these noble objectives. Transport and road links between our countries and the implementation of the power-transmission lines projects, including the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000), as well as the training and professional development of experts in different areas,

are among the projects that we are carrying out with that country.

Fighting drug trafficking, which is one of the main sources of funding of international terrorism, calls for the joint effort and strong will of the international community to help the country get rid of this evil. Tajikistan has established cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, regional organizations and partner countries at the bilateral level. We are currently successfully implementing our National Strategy on Combating Illicit Drugs 2013-2020.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the international community was a key milestone in our joint work to advance sustainable development and involve all sectors of society in the process. Over the past few years, Tajikistan has made great strides towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government of my country, in close and effective cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, has developed and adopted the Mid-Term Development Strategy 2020 and the National Development Strategy 2016-2030. These strategies have been developed in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we believe that their timely and effective implementation will contribute to achieving the Agenda.

Tajikistan was among 43 countries that presented their voluntary national review in July at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in New York. To achieve the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it is necessary to help the least developed countries and developing countries, particularly by providing financial support and cutting-edge technologies, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is worth mentioning that the geographical situation of landlocked developing countries and their lack of access to sea ports are serious obstacles to honouring their commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries in these circumstances need much more assistance from developed countries and international financial institutions in their efforts to develop infrastructure, improve transport systems and simplify trade policies and regional integration. The specialized institutions and agencies of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Council, can and should have an important role in this regard.

We believe that the more attention we give to economic, social and environmental issues, the better we can contribute to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. That would also help countries to cope with their social challenges and improve the livelihood and living standards of their people by providing jobs.

We, the representatives of the international community, adopted the Paris Agreement on Climate Change two years ago. The goals enshrined in that critical document determine the major obligations and efforts of the international community in reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere, adaptation to climate change and transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

Climate change accelerates the melting of glaciers, which affects the rise of the water level in rivers and negatively affects certain sectors of the national economy. With 93 per cent of its territory surrounded by mountains, Tajikistan, owing to its geographical location, faces the devastating consequences of climate change and natural disasters. Every year, the country suffers from natural disasters, including those related to water. Tajikistan spends hundreds of millions of dollars to tackle and eliminate the consequences of natural disasters.

Over the past 30 years, Tajikistan has lost more than 1,000 of its 13,000 glaciers due to melting as a result of climate change and temperature rise. This comes at a time when the industrial capability of Tajikistan, which is the main source of its carbon dioxide emissions, is not especially large. Ninety-eight per cent of the country's energy is produced by hydroelectric power stations, generating environmentally friendly energy. Over 60 per cent of Central Asian water resources are currently formed in Tajikistan. It is obvious that the accelerated melting of glaciers adversely affects water levels in the region.

In this regard, the time has come for us to turn our words into actions and demonstrate our resolve to implement the goals of the Paris Agreement. In our view, one way to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement is to adhere to the green economy recommmendations and promote the comprehensive use of renewable energy sources. In this context, we express our full support of the international Sustainable Energy for All initiative and the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014-2024. It is important for the international

community to make vigorous efforts to achieve these goals.

Tajikistan is strongly committed to maintaining its contribution to implementing the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda. It is with great pleasure that I note that, in December 2016, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 71/222, entitled "International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028". We believe that the implementation of the new Decade at the national, regional and international levels will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals related to water and help to preserve that invaluable resource for generations to come.

This morning we conducted a high-level side event entitled "Towards Implementation of the International Decade of Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development', 2018-2028", at which participants exchanged views on ways and means to implement the new international Decade and Sustainable Development Goal 6. Furthermore, in order to review and deliberate on proposals by development partners and with a view to adopting a road map for the Decade, we intend to organize, on 22 March 2018, World Water Day, a special event in New York to celebrate the launch of the international Decade and to host a high-level international conference on water for sustainable development in Dushanbe next June. We strongly believe that the States Members of the United Nations, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, think-tank associations, women and youth will stand together and work to achieve the Decade's goals and objectives for the sake of the lives of people around the globe and to ensure a better future for coming generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Tajikistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lungu: Let me join previous speakers in congratulating His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also wish to extend Zambia's sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his able leadership during the seventy-first session.

May I also convey my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres and congratulate him on his appointment as the ninth Secretary-General. I am confident that the Secretary-General will build upon the strong foundation that was laid by his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to whom I wish to pay glowing tribute for the manner in which he steered the Organization during his tenure of office.

The theme for this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", provides us with an opportunity to evaluate the existing multilateral approaches to address the challenges affecting our peoples. They include threats to socioeconomic development and international peace and security. There is a need, therefore, to develop innovative approaches and responses to the challenges, which include terrorism, climate change, nuclear weapons and HIV/AIDS, among many others. In today's globalized and interdependent world, no country, however wealthy or powerful, can resolve all those challenges single-handedly. Common solutions are therefore required through a strong United Nations.

This year's session is taking place against a backdrop of the adverse effects of climate change, which have spared no one nation, developed or underdeveloped. Our efforts to raise the standard of living for the world's poor people in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals are being frustrated by the effects of climate change. We have witnessed the devastating effects of climate change on our environment. Recently, there have been many hurricanes in the Caribbean. I remember a time when forests were within a child's walking distance, in particular in Africa, and were

teeming with a profusion of flora and fauna. That is no longer the case. Unfortunately, a myriad of species of flora and fauna have become extinct in a very short time. We have also continued to witness disasters such as droughts, wildfires, flooding and landslides; if not extreme levels of rain, it is the lack of it.

As the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change draws near, Zambia is expectant that the Conference will, among other things, establish mechanisms for the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. Furthermore, we call on all stakeholders to ensure that the Green Climate Fund is adequately funded in order to help deliver the necessary interventions globally. As a developing country, Zambia needs assistance to enhance its capacity in key adaptive areas, such as scientific research, early warning and rapid response in order to address the adverse effects of climate change. Accordingly, Zambia also calls for the transfer of appropriate technologies to help cope with the negative impact of climate change.

Over the past year, Zambia has made significant developmental efforts and is determined to foster an all-inclusive development paradigm, based on the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Only a few months ago, on 21 June, I had the honour to launch the seventh National Development Plan, which is Zambia's development blueprint for the five-year period from 2017 to 2021. Its theme is "Accelerating development efforts towards the attainment of the National Vision 2030, without leaving anyone behind". The plan seeks to improve productivity in agriculture, create job opportunities in other sectors, such as manufacturing, and particular attention will be given to lifting standards of living in rural areas, where a new focus on agro-value addition is being implemented. Through that plan, Zambia aims to reduce poverty to minimal levels.

In keeping with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, my Government is determined to ensure the effective mobilization and use of all sources of finance, whether mobilized locally or through our international cooperation partners, for the benefit of the average person in Zambia — as long as it is not illicit financing.

Peace, security and the rule of law continue to be the basis for the meaningful development of any society. In keeping with that understanding, my Government has continued to work in solidarity with nations that are undertaking the necessary actions to enhance their democracies. Through its membership in the African Union Peace and Security Council, Zambia has also continued to provide support for those still afflicted by conflict. My Government also looks forward to serving the Troika of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation of the Southern African Development Community from 2017 to 2020, following our recent election to the Organ. I would like to assure the Assembly that my Government will use its membership in these two bodies to foster peace globally, especially in Africa.

We wish to recognize the vision and experience of the various regional and international bodies that complement the United Nations agenda. As a member State, we note the role of the Commonwealth of Nations in various subjects such as gender and youth matters, climate change, the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, good governance and socioeconomic development. In my country, the Commonwealth Secretariat has played an important role in providing technical support during and after the previously held elections, and this we cannot ignore.

Zambia has also continued to serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations with a sense of duty to those persons who have found their security under threat for various reasons. In this regard, the United Nations should not shirk its noble duty to these vulnerable persons; it should redouble its efforts to bring about a more peaceful world.

The United Nations commitment should not be limited to preventing conflict, but should go further in seeking to protect victims of conflict, including displaced persons. There is a need for all of us to cooperate in providing for a environment conducive to respect for their human rights, social development and well-being. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that in June this year, in Zambia, I assented to Zambia's Refugees Act of 2017, which further speaks to this noble duty and replaces the previous law, which did not go far enough to ensure an environment conducive to the promotion of human rights for the displaced in the region who happen to be hosted by our country, Zambia.

My Government attaches great importance to the needs and welfare of all, with a particular focus on women, children and youth. Zambia has therefore

continued to make tremendous strides in its campaign to end child marriage. The current prevalence rate stands at 31.2 per cent, which represents a 10.8 per cent reduction from the 42 per cent rate at the time the campaign was launched. We have also continued to engage traditional leaders in reforming traditions and customs that allow child marriage. Currently, we are in the process of harmonizing statutory and customary law on marriage to completely prohibit and eradicate child marriage in the country. Going forward, we are also repealing a number of discriminatory and outdated statutes related to children with a view to devising a Children's Code to incorporate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into our domestic law.

As the designated 2017 African Union champion for ending child marriage, I am delighted to inform the Assembly that a campaign to that end has been launched in 20 of the 30 targeted countries in Africa with the highest prevalence rates of child marriage. These programmes are essential to enhancing advocacy against child marriage at the national level. The campaign is growing from strength to strength. However, much more needs to be done. We therefore call on all partners to join their efforts, and, together, let us raise our voices to protect our children and young people. The campaign will continue to gain momentum and reach out to member States to accelerate an end to this harmful practice.

Undoubtedly, the United Nations remains the only multilateral institution capable of addressing the challenges of our "one world". The world looks to the Organization to encourage dialogue on global challenges in an inclusive manner. This is the only practical way to ensure meaningful and effective international cooperation. There is, however, a need to reform the United Nations.

Zambia believes that the United Nations reforms that have been launched will be incomplete without meaningful reform of the Security Council. It is our hope that reforms will make the Security Council more representative, democratic and accountable to all States Members of the United Nations, irrespective of status. This is essential if its decisions are to be accepted by the entire international community. Given that Africa constitutes the second largest bloc of United Nations membership, proposals to reform the Security Council should heed the African continent's call set forth in the Ezulwini Consensus.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Zambia's commitment to cooperate with the international community in addressing the numerous problems affecting our people, including ending poverty. We should not miss the opportunity to do what we can to make the world a better place for all of us to live.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grybauskaitė: The topic of this year's debate invites us to focus on people and our responsibility to ensure their peaceful and sustainable future. However, in today's world, such a peaceful future is threatened as never before. Authoritarian regimes continue to kill with impunity, extremist ideologies treat innocent people with unspeakable cruelty, and thousands die after leaving their homes in search for a better and more peaceful life.

The world's attention is now focused on North Korea and in some other regions, but the same kinds of blackmail, bullying and aggression that we see there are also being used by Russia in Ukraine and along NATO's eastern border. As we speak, approximately 100,000 Russian troops are engaged in Exercise Zapad 2017 — offensive military exercises on the borders of Baltic States, Poland and even in the Arctic. The Kremlin is rehearsing aggressive scenarios against its neighbours, training its army to attack the West. The exercise is also part of information warfare that aims to spread uncertainty and fear. It is even more disturbing

that the Zapad 2017 exercise is just one symptom of the Kremlin's inability to finally end its hatred towards the West.

Despite Russia's special responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council to protect international peace, it violated the Charter of the United Nations by attacking Georgia, illegally annexing Crimea and directly participating in the war in the east of Ukraine. The Kremlin's arsenal does not stop at conventional weapons. Russia continues to meddle in elections and conduct cyberattacks, and it uses its sputniks to spread fake news and destabilizing propaganda. Energy blackmail has long been Russia's weapon of choice. For example, in Belarus, just 40 kilometres from Lithuania's capital, it is building the unsafe Astravyets nuclear power plant as a geopolitical weapon that fails to comply with basic international nuclear standards.

Abuses and indifference to basic international norms by regimes across the world are not unrelated. Too often they are a result of our collective failure to condemn or properly react to violations. Time and time again we lack the courage to enforce the rules that we ourselves have established. We draw red lines in the sand and then pretend they do not exist. That has to change. Bullies are aggressive precisely because they are weak and insecure, which is why we must stop being passive observers and start calling things by their real names. Aggression can never make anyone stronger. It can never earn anyone a single drop of respect. The only thing that aggression will bring about is contempt, shame and condemnation.

The international community has to take a share of responsibility. We cannot let fear win by closing our eyes to violators, because that will only encourage them to go further. We must learn to read the warning signs, because abuse of human rights, nationalist rhetoric and the suppression of free speech explode into violence if ignored.

Finally, we must change the United Nations. This unique universal body was created to save the world from wars and instability. So far it has failed to fulfil that purpose. We now face a choice — we either give the Organization the voice to rise up against the abuse, or we render it irrelevant.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Qatar.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We wish him every success in his mandate. I also wish to express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for his valuable efforts in managing the affairs of the General Assembly during the seventy-first session. I also take this opportunity to commend the efforts of His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres to strengthen the role of the United Nations.

Maintaining regional and international peace and security is a priority in the foreign policy of the State of Qatar, which bases its principles and objectives on the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law. It calls for constructive cooperation among States, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs, as well as good-neighbourliness and the promotion of peaceful coexistence, while pursuing peaceful means to settle disputes.

The issue of settling disputes by peaceful means is still being addressed as an episodic and non-binding proposal. Perhaps the time has come to impose dialogue and negotiation as a basis for resolving disputes by concluding an international convention on settling disputes between States by peaceful means.

In that context, and after major events such as the Second World War, Rwanda and Burundi and the Balkan conflicts in the past century, the danger of the impunity of perpetrators of crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide has returned to threaten humankind by

becoming the rule rather than the exception, because international legitimacy is subjected to political pressure, the interests of parties and the dictation of force on the ground, which maintain that the law of force is able to supersede the force of law.

In our view, major Powers should not range between two extremes: the direct occupation of countries to impose the occupier's will and policy, or standing idly by as an observer who does nothing with regard to wars of genocide and crimes against humanity perpetrated by fascist, despotic regimes, or to continuous repression by an occupying State of the people under occupation.

Lately there has been a growing sense that people under repression face their fate alone, as if the international arena were governed by the law of the jungle and the countries under threat had to stand on their own through help from their alliances and relations, in the absence of a system to implement the provisions of international law and binding conventions and charters.

We commend the President for the theme chosen for this session, that is, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". In that context, I call upon the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the international community to assume their legal and moral responsibility and take the measures necessary to stop the violence against the Rohingya minority, provide them with protection, repatriate the displaced to their homeland, prevent sectarian or ethnic discrimination against them and ensure that they have their full legitimate rights as full-fledged citizens. We urge all States to provide humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya.

Every time I stand here, I speak in favour of constructive international cooperation, just peace and the rights of peoples under occupation, those who are subjected to crimes against humanity and those who are under siege. This time I stand here while my country and my people are subjected to a continuing and unjust blockade, imposed since 5 June by our neighbouring countries. The blockade involves all aspects of life, including intervention by those countries to sever family ties. At the moment Qatar is successfully managing its life — its economy, development plans and its outreach to the wider world — thanks to sea and air routes that those countries do not control.

The blockade was imposed abruptly and without warning, prompting Qataris to consider it as a kind of betrayal. It seems that those who planned and implemented it had envisaged that their action would cause a shocking and direct impact that would bring the State of Qatar to its knees and cause it to capitulate to a total guardianship imposed upon it.

What is worse, those who schemed for the blockade found it necessary to rely on fabricated quotes attributed to me, which they posted on the Qatar News Agency website after hacking it. The controlled media of those countries were ready to launch an all-out campaign of incitement, prepared in advance, in which all values, morals and norms were breached, while a torrent of lies infringed upon the truth. Funds are still being spent unsparingly on the machine faking news and disseminating fabrications in the hope of fooling people by distorting the truth with plain lies.

Despite the exposure of the hacking and falsification of quotes by the Amir of a sovereign State, the blockading countries did not back down or apologize for lying, but rather intensified their campaign, in the hope that the blockade would cause a cumulative effect on the economy and the society of my country, after it failed to have any direct impact. The perpetrators of the hacking and the falsified quotes have committed an assault against a sovereign State. The crime was deliberately committed for political aims and was followed by a list of political declarations, which contravene sovereignty. They caused worldwide astonishment.

This disgraceful act has once again raised international questions about digital security, cybercrime and electronic piracy. It has also revealed the anxiety in many public and official circles around the world over the absence of clear-cut international legislation and institutions to govern this dangerous and vital field, or to punish the perpetrators of transnational crimes. It is high time to take steps in this regard. We are ready to mobilize our potential to serve in such a joint effort.

The countries that imposed the unjust blockade on Qatar have intervened in the internal affairs of the State by putting pressure on the citizens through food, medicine and family ties, with a view to forcing them to change their political affiliation so as to destabilize a sovereign country. Is this not one of the definitions of terrorism?

This illegal blockade was not confined to the economic field and to breaching the World Trade Organization agreement, but went beyond that to violate human rights conventions by arbitrary measures that have caused social and religious harm to thousands of citizens and residents of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council by violating the basic human rights to work, education and the freedom of movement and the right to private property.

However, things did not stop at that point, as the blockading countries went on to persecute their own citizens on their own territories and to impose penalties of imprisonment and fines on them for the mere expression of their sympathy with the State of Qatar, even on social media. That was unprecedented, and it violates the human rights conventions and agreements that guarantee the right to the freedom of opinion and expression.

There are countries that not only attack a neighbouring country so as to dictate its foreign policy and media policy, but also believe that having a lot of money qualifies them to put pressure on other countries and blackmail them to participate in their aggression, while they are supposed to be held accountable internationally for what they have committed.

The countries that imposed the blockade on the State of Qatar are interfering in the internal affairs of many countries and accuse all those who oppose them, domestically or abroad, of terrorism. Thus they are harming the war on terror, while at the same time opposing reform and supporting the tyrannical regimes in our region, in whose prisons terrorists are born.

We were not alone in being taken by surprise by the imposition of the blockade, as many countries whose leaders have questioned its motives and reasons were also surprised. The blockading countries have promised all those who asked them about the reasons for the blockade to provide them with evidence of their absurd anti-Qatar allegations and fabrications, which keep changing according to the identity of the person being asked. Everyone is still waiting for evidence, which has not arrived and will not arrive — because it does not exist. On the contrary, those allegations contradict the considerable evidence about Qatar's contribution to the fight against terrorism, which is recognized by the entire international community.

The State of Qatar has fought terrorism, and the entire international community bears witness to that. It is still fighting terrorism and will continue to do so. It stands in the camp of those who are fighting by security means and believes that it is necessary to fight terrorism ideologically as well. Qatar goes beyond that to participate in drying up its sources by providing education to 7 million children around the world, so that they do not fall prey to ignorance and radical ideas.

We have refused to yield to dictation by pressure and blockade, and our people will not be satisfied with anything less. At the same time, we have taken an open attitude towards dialogue without dictation and have expressed our readiness to resolve differences through compromises based on common undertakings. Resolving conflicts by peaceful means is one of the priorities of our foreign policy. I renew here the call for an unconditional dialogue based on mutual respect for sovereignty. I highly value the sincere and appreciated mediation that the State of Qatar has supported since the beginning of the crisis, which was initiated by my brother, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the sisterly State of Kuwait. I also thank all the countries that have supported this mediation.

Allow me on this occasion to express here my pride in my Qatari people, along with the multinational and multicultural residents of Qatar. The people have withstood the conditions of siege, rejected dictation with resolve and pride, insisted on the independence of Qatar's sovereign decision and strengthened its unity and solidarity, while maintaining their refined manners and their progress despite the fierceness of the campaign launched against them and their country.

I reiterate my thanks to the sisterly and friendly countries that recognize the significance of respecting the sovereignty of States and the rule of international law, while also appreciating their stance of remaining supportive of the Qatari people during this crisis.

Terrorism and extremism are among the most serious challenges facing the world. Countering them requires us all to carry out concerted action against terrorist organizations and their extremist ideology, in order to maintain security for humankind and stability for the world. Governments worldwide have no choice but to cooperate in dealing with the threat of terrorism as a security issue, but halting the spread of terrorism and extremism can be achieved by addressing its social, political and cultural root causes. We must also

be careful not to use the fight against terrorism as an umbrella to cover reprisals or the shelling of civilians.

The fight against terrorism and extremism was and will continue to be a top priority. That is affirmed by the effective participation of the State of Qatar in regional and international efforts to implement the measures included in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted in 2006, and all the Security Council resolutions and measures related to countering terrorism and its financing.

We have also participated in international coalitions and regional organizations and nurtured bilateral relations with the United States of America and many countries of the world. The State of Qatar will continue its regional and international efforts in this regard and will develop them further.

While reaffirming our condemnation of all forms of extremism and terrorism, we reject the tackling of this phenomenon using double standards, according to the identity of the perpetrators, or linking terrorism with a particular religion, race, civilization, culture or society.

The issues facing the Middle East continue to pose the greatest threat to international peace and security due to the vital importance of that region to the world. Israel still stands in the way of achieving a lasting, just and comprehensive peace and rejects the Arab Peace Initiative. The Israeli Government maintains its intransigent approach and strategy to create facts on the ground through expanding settlement construction in the occupied territories, Judaizing Jerusalem and restricting the performance of religious rituals in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is a serious, provocative act. It also continues to impose its blockade on the Gaza Strip.

The international community must give high priority to the resumption of peace negotiations on the basis of ending the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories within a specified time frame, and to reaching a just, comprehensive and vital settlement, in accordance with the two-State solution, agreed upon by the international community and based on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative. A settlement will be achieved only through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital. I renew my appeal to my Palestinian brothers to achieve national reconciliation, consolidate their positions and speak with one voice when confronting the dangers and challenges facing the Palestinian question on the future of the Palestinian people.

The international community is unable to find a solution to the Syrian crisis despite its consequences and serious repercussions for the region and the world. Political efforts continue to falter due to conflicting international and regional interests, which serve to protect those against whom we are supposed to stand united. The international community has relinquished its legal and moral responsibilities, including the implementation of its decisions, and has succumbed to the logic of force. What is required is serious work to reach a political solution to the Syrian crisis in a way that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people to justice, dignity and freedom, and to maintain the unity and sovereignty of Syria, in accordance with the decisions of the Geneva I Conference on Syria. Qatar will spare no effort in providing support and assistance to alleviate the humanitarian suffering of our Syrian brothers and to implement our humanitarian pledges within the framework of the United Nations.

The international community has given up the task of protecting civilians. Will it also hesitate to find war criminals accountable? Their impunity will have dire consequences for the situation in Syria and the region, and would affect the behaviour of future dictatorships towards their peoples in the absence of any deterrent.

Turning to the Libyan question, Libya's national consensus, which would preserve its unity, sovereignty and social fabric and restore its stability, could be achieved by means of combining domestic and international efforts. We must all intensify our efforts and support the Government of National Accord, which has been established with the support of the United Nations, in its effort to restore stability and to counter terrorism and its grave consequences. The State of Qatar has supported international mediation efforts and will support them in future in order to meet the aspirations of the Libyan people.

Concerning the fraternal country of Iraq, we support the efforts of the Iraqi Government to achieve security, stability and the unity of the territory and people of Iraq. We commend the achievements of the Iraqi people in their fight against terrorism. We reaffirm our support to promote their victory by helping the people of Iraq to realize their aspirations for equality among all its citizens and to restore Iraq's role at the regional and international levels.

Concerning Yemen, we affirm the importance of maintaining Yemen's unity, security and stability and ending the state of infighting and war, while adopting dialogue, a political solution and national reconciliation as a basis for ending this crisis and implementing Security Council resolution 2216 (2015). We call on the international community to facilitate the access of humanitarian assistance to various Yemeni regions. The State of Qatar supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen to end the crisis and realize the aspirations of the brotherly Yemeni people to attain unity, security and stability.

In order to achieve security and stability in the Gulf region, we reiterate the call that we have made before from this rostrum for a constructive dialogue between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Iran on the basis of common interests, the principle of good-neighbourliness, respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

In the framework of international efforts to address humanitarian crises, the State of Qatar continues to contribute to the international response to the growing humanitarian needs of the world at large. We have increased our financial contributions to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) so as to enable the Organization to implement its programmes and provide humanitarian relief to those in need worldwide.

The State of Qatar ranks third on the list of major donors to OCHA in 2017. We continue to provide support to countries facing challenges in implementing their development plans. It is worth mentioning here that the State of Qatar ranked first in the Arab world and 33rd in the world in the field of human development. This proves the effectiveness of our humanitarian and development policy. We look forward to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which we all have committed to achieve.

In conclusion, we reiterate that the State of Qatar will spare no effort in strengthening the role of the United Nations and and efforts to achieve what the international community seeks, bringing peace and security and promoting human rights and advancing development. Qatar will remain, as is always the case, a safe haven for the oppressed, and we will continue its mediation efforts to find just solutions in conflict zones.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Amir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Erdoğan (*spoke in Turkish, interpretation provided by the delegation*): I greet the General Assembly with respect on behalf of myself and my country.

I would like to thank Mr. Peter Thomson for his successful work over the past year as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, who has assumed the presidency of the General Assembly.

I hope that this year's session of the General Assembly, which has been convened under the theme "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", will bring well-being to all of the world's peoples.

Unfortunately, global peace and stability have regressed further since our meeting in the Hall last year. We continue to see the ugly face of terror and war in different corners of the world. Terrorists, who are fuelled by an environment of conflict, continue their acts, spreading terror across different regions. We are anxiously observing the violent actions of radical currents converging on xenophobia, cultural racism and animosity against Islam.

The most effective way of reversing this negative outlook would be to engage in sincere cooperation in the Hall. We need to develop a new perspective to promote world peace. No crisis or threat can possibly

be resolved by allowing it to play out on its own. We all have to shoulder responsibility for a safer and more prosperous world. It is in that understanding that Turkey is pursuing an enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy.

The Syrian conflict has entered its seventh year. This conflict has created deep wounds in the country, the region and throughout the world. In Syria, an entire civilization is being annihilated, together with civilians and innocent children. Terrorism, which is destroying the country and is fuelled by instability and oppression, is spreading like a cancer across borders. The Syrian people who took action demanding democracy, freedom, justice and a bright future were, unfortunately, abandoned by the international community.

Turkey cannot remain indifferent to the tragedy of these people, whom we see as our brothers and sisters regardless of their origin or creed and to whom we are connected by deep historical ties. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria in the spring of 2011, we have exerted all kinds of humanitarian and political efforts to solve the problem and we will continue to do so. We are currently hosting more than 3 million Syrians and over 200,000 Iraqis in our country. Together with Russia and Iran, we have launched the Astana meetings, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, in order to establish a permanent ceasefire and peace in the country.

Following our initiatives, the Geneva process, which has long been blocked, has been revived. We are putting into practice a new plan to ensure the security of the Idlib region in Syria within the framework of the agreement reached in Astana. Turkey would support any step towards the construction of a stable and prosperous Syria, based on the territorial integrity of the country and on respect for the democratic demands of its people.

We have taken and will continue to take all kinds of measures for those who came to our country with the outbreak of the Syrian crisis and to stem the influx of refugees into Europe. We meet all the needs of these people, from shelter to food and clothing and from health care to education, at standards that are appreciated by all those who visit our country. However, I would like to underscore that we have not received sufficient support from the international community, especially from the European Union, for our efforts. The expenditures of our public institutions, civil-society organizations and our people in order to meet the needs of those living in the camps and cities in Turkey have exceeded $30 billion. In response, the European Union has sent only €820 million out of the €3 billion + €3 billion that it promised. The total assistance from the international community through the United Nations remains around $520 million. I should point out that no share of the assistance intended for the Syrians goes into our own budget; it is all delivered to those in need by the relief agencies through the relevant institutions of the United Nations.

Before the whole world, I hereby call on the countries and international organizations that have placed the entire burden of the 3.2 million people on Turkey's shoulders to fulfil the promises they made. In fact, Turkey is a country that carries out humanitarian aid and development assistance activities around the world. Not only do we welcome those who come to our country, but through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Turkish Disaster and Management Authority and the Turkish Red Crescent and various civil-society organizations we rush to the help of all who are suffering and under oppression, regardless of which part of the world they may be in. For example, through its official institutions and civil-society organizations, Turkey has spent $1 billion for the reconstruction of Somalia so far. The work we carry out and the results we have achieved in Somalia could indeed provide an example for similar efforts.

According to confirmed statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with $6 billion in humanitarian and development aid in 2016, Turkey ranked as the world's second-largest donor and top contributor in terms of gross national product. Yet, Turkey is the seventeenth-largest economy in the world. Having spent 0.8 per cent of its national income on humanitarian assistance, Turkey is one of the six countries that could meet the United Nations target.

Therefore, Turkey is working diligently to achieve a sustainable world, which is the theme of this session of the General Assembly. We will continue in the coming days with the same consideration in mind.

Turkey is engaged in an intense fight against the bloody terrorist organizations of the region, such as Da'esh and the Kurdish Workers' Party, which are nourished by the instability in Syria and Iraq. In addition, our fight against the Fethullah Terrorist Organization, which attempted to change the legitimate

and democratic regime of Turkey by a bloody coup, is also ongoing. We have recovered 243 residential areas and a tract of land larger than 2,000 kilometres thanks to Operation Euphrates Shield, initiated in Syria following the attacks by Da'esh on our borders. We neutralized almost 3,000 Da'esh militants during that operation. Around 100,000 Syrians returned to and resettled in the region we cleared of terrorists. Operation Euphrates Shield is the single greatest accomplishment against Da'esh since its occupation of the region.

I must highlight the following fact before the Assembly. Most of the groups and forces claiming to be fighting Da'esh in the region in fact have no such goal. These groups and forces are using Da'esh as a pretext to realize their own agendas.

The efforts of the Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat-People's Protection Units to change the demographic structure of the regions it has captured, to seize the property of the people and to kill or exile those who stand against it constitute a crime against humanity.

If the fight against Da'esh is not waged on a legitimate basis, the world will certainly face the threat of new, Da'esh-like entities.

Similar approaches exist in Iraq as well. Iraq also requires that compromises be reached on the basis of territorial integrity and the realization of the ideal of building a common future. Steps such as demands for independence that can cause fresh crises and conflicts in the region must be avoided. We hereby call on the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government to abort the initiative that it has launched in that direction. Ignoring the clear and determined stance of Turkey on this issue could lead to a process that would deprive the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government of even the opportunities they currently enjoy. We all should work on building tranquillity, peace, security and stability in the region instead of sparking new conflicts.

In addition to Syria and Iraq, we are also closely following regions in Libya and in Yemen where terrorist organizations are trying to establish their influence. The international community's support for the legitimate Government of Libya will contribute significantly to the stability of the country. It should be kept in mind that if the mistakes made in Syria and Iraq were to be repeated in Libya, that would expose the entire world, particularly Europe, to much greater threats.

Another issue on which Turkey places special emphasis is the immediate resolution of the conflict that has erupted in the Gulf region. We believe that the sanctions that are negatively affecting the living conditions of the Qatari people should be lifted forthwith. We support the mediation efforts of the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to resolve the crisis. Our hope is that these efforts will yield positive results. We also hope that Saudi Arabia, which we see as the elder brother of the Gulf region, will show a sincere will to resolve this issue.

Another important problem is the issue of Palestine, which we consider to be the gaping wound of the world, and, by extension, the preservation of the historical status of Jerusalem and Al-Haram Al-Sharif, that is, the Temple Mount. The crisis in Al-Haram Al-Sharif in July demonstrated the sensitivity of the issue. The continuation of the peace process can be possible only on the condition that Israel immediately stop its illegal settlement activities and take steps towards a two-State solution.

In this context, I call on the international community to support our Palestinian brothers and sisters in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in their struggle for an independent and geographically unified Palestinian State.

Despite the current absence of conflict there, the Balkans is another geographical location of potential crisis that still faces serious challenges. For this reason, we attach great importance to the integration of the Balkan countries into the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Turkey will continue to do its part to ensure that peace, stability and well-being prevail in this exceptional part of the world.

The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia is the key to regional stability in the southern Caucasus. Therefore, we need to work harder towards the resolution of the conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

We should never forget that each crisis we ignore today has the potential to spark a regional or even global crisis tomorrow. In this context, I would also like to underline that we are against nuclear weapons of all kinds, which have increasingly come to occupy the world agenda in recent days. It is clear that we cannot overcome these problems unless we completely free the world of the scourge of nuclear weapons.

We are also saddened by the fact that the comprehensive negotiation process begun in 2008 has ended owing to the incomprehensible stance of the Greek Cypriots. We will do our best to ensure that the natural resources discovered in the eastern Mediterranean in recent years serve to further the peace, stability and welfare of the region. We are ready to consider proposals for a solution that respects the rights of Turkish Cypriots.

Our world, already struggling with all of these global and regional problems, was shocked once again by the sad news that we received from Myanmar a few weeks ago. The Muslim community in the Rakhine region of Myanmar is being subjected to what almost amounts to ethnic cleansing, with provocative terrorist acts used as a pretext. The villages of the Rohingya Muslims, who have already been living in extreme poverty and misery, deprived of their citizenship rights, are being burned as hundreds of thousands of people are forced to migrate from the region and the country.

The camps in Bangladesh to which the people migrating from the region are being diverted are not in a position to meet even their minimum humanitarian needs. As is the case in Syria, the international community has not given a good account of itself regarding the humanitarian plight of the Rohingya Muslims. If the tragedy in Myanmar is not stopped, the history of humankind will be marred by yet another dark stain. What is most important is to ensure that the Rohingya people who have taken refuge outside their country, especially in Bangladesh, are able to live in safety and peace and in conditions of well-being on their own lands, where they have lived for centuries. Turkey is endeavouring to help resolve this crisis as well.

Recently, on the occasion of a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), we held a special session on that issue in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, with the participating countries. My wife, my son and our Ministers who visited the camps in Bangladesh immediately after the latest crisis personally witnessed the humanitarian plight of the people there. Clothing, food and other humanitarian aid was provided, and we are now looking at the second phase of such aid. We will be holding a meeting of the OIC Contact Group on Rohingya Muslims here at the United Nations this afternoon. As I mentioned, my wife, my son, our Ministers and some Turkish non-governmental organizations visited the area. The Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Turkish official aid organization, is also in the region; it is the only organization carrying out assistance activities.

Furthermore, the Turkish Red Crescent and other non-governmental organizations are continuing to deliver humanitarian aid to the Rakhine Muslims in Myanmar. If the countries concerned provide the necessary means, we would like to continue our assistance activities in a more comprehensive way. I discussed these issues with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency António Guterres, and we are now preparing to take further steps.

All these developments and humanitarian tragedies confirm the relevance of our appeal for the restructuring of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, as symbolized by our motto, "The world is bigger than five". Gathered here under this roof, we must understand that it is high time to reform the Security Council. Under this roof, we represent the entire world, but if we cannot display the will to prevent murders carried out by terrorist organizations or prevent humanitarian crises, then everyone will find ways to help themselves.

If that understanding prevails, then our world will be dragged into a new maelstorm of chaos and cruelty. If Western countries do not prevent tendencies such as xenophobia, racism and animosity against Islam, if the countries in the crisis-ridden regions of the world do not demonstrate decisive will to fight terrorist organizations and poverty, and if all of us do not cooperate with one another on all of those fronts, then how can we possibly reach our ideals of peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet?

We support the work done to that end by the Secretary-General, with whom we cooperated closely during his tenure as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is in nobody's interest to insist on the continuation of this distorted system, which no longer has the capacity to take concrete steps towards the good of humankind under its current form.

We want the Security Council to have a democratic, transparent, fair and effective structure. We propose that the Security Council consist of 20 members with the same rights and competencies — each member serving for two years and half replaced every year. In that way, all countries would have a say in that important organ when it was their turn. It is imperative that we transform the United Nations, because the world is changing. We

are living in a different world than the one where the United Nations was established after the Second World War. We must talk about a United Nations administered by representatives of the entire world as the embodiment of humankind's common conscience.

Before I conclude my remarks, let me remind the Assembly that, regardless of the colour of our faces and eyes, our tears are the same. I urge the Assembly take action immediately to stop the tears flowing in different parts of the world. I hope that the work of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly will contribute to our efforts to that end. With those thoughts, I salute with amity and respect all countries and peoples represented under this roof, at this joint parliament of humankind. On my own behalf, and on behalf of my country, I extend my greetings to the Assembly. God bless the Assembly.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Turkey for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Danon (Israel), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 8

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): We are in the midst of a great revolution — a revolution in Israel's standing among the nations. It is happening because so many countries around the world have finally woken up to what Israel can do for them. Those countries now recognize what brilliant investors like Warren Buffett and great companies like Google and Intel have recognized and known for years, that is, that Israel is the innovation nation, the place for cutting-edge technology in agriculture, in water, in cybersecurity, in medicine, in autonomous vehicles. You name it, we have got it.

Those countries now also recognize Israel's exceptional capabilities in fighting terrorism. In recent years, Israel has provided intelligence that has prevented dozens of major terrorist attacks around the world. We have saved countless lives. Members may not know it, but their Governments do. And they are working closely together with Israel to keep their countries and its citizens safe.

I stood here last year, at this rostrum, and I spoke about that profound change in Israel's standing around the world (see A/71/PV.14). Just look at what has happened since. In one year, hundreds of Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and other leaders have visited Israel — many for the first time. Of those many visits, two were truly historic. In May, President Trump became the first American President to include Israel in his first visit abroad. President Trump stood at the Western Wall, at the foot of the Temple Mount, where the Jewish people's temples stood for nearly 1,000 years. When the President touched those ancient stones, he touched our hearts forever.

In July, Prime Minister Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. Some here may have seen the pictures. We were on a beach in Hadera. We rode together in a Jeep outfitted with a portable desalination device that some thriving Israeli entrepreneur invented. We took off our shoes, waded into the Mediterranean and drank seawater that had been purified only a few minutes earlier. We imagined the endless possibilities for Israel, for India and for all of humankind.

In the past year, Israel has hosted many world leaders. I had the honour of representing my country on six different continents in one year. I went to Africa, where I saw Israeli innovators increasing crop yields, turning air into water, fighting AIDS. I went to Asia, where we deepened our relations with China and Singapore, and expanded our cooperation with our Muslim friends in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. I went to Europe, where, in London and Paris, Thessaloniki and Budapest we enhanced our security and economic ties. I went to Australia, becoming the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit our great allies down under. And just last week, I went to South America, visiting Argentina and Colombia, and then I went on to Mexico — becoming, if members can believe it, the

first Israeli Prime Minister to visit Latin America. After 70 years, the world is embracing Israel, and Israel is embracing the world.

In one year, I visited six continents. It is true that I have not yet visited Antarctica, but I want to go there too, because I have heard that penguins are also enthusiastic supporters of Israel. Members laugh. But penguins have no difficulty recognizing that some things are black or white, are right or wrong. Unfortunately, when it comes to United Nations decisions about Israel, that simple recognition is too often absent. It was absent last December, when the Security Council adopted anti-Israel resolution 2334 (2016), which set back the cause of peace.

It was absent last May, when the World Health Organization — one has to listen to this — adopted a Syrian-sponsored draft resolution that criticized Israel for health conditions on the Golan Heights. As the great John McEnroe would say, "You cannot be serious!" That is preposterous. Syria has barrel-bombed, starved, gassed and murdered hundreds of thousands of its own citizens, and wounded millions more, while Israel has provided life-saving medical care to thousands of Syrian victims of that very same carnage. Yet who does the World Health Organization criticize? Israel.

Is there no limit to United Nations absurdities when it comes to Israel? Apparently not, because in July, UNESCO declared the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron a Palestinian World Heritage Site. That is worse than fake news; that is fake history. While it is true that Abraham, the father of both Ishmael and Isaac, is buried there, so are Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah — who just happen to be patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people. Members will not read about that in the latest UNESCO report. But if members want to read about it, they can in a somewhat weightier publication. It is called the Bible. I highly recommend it. I hear it got four and a half out of five stars on Amazon, and it is a great read. I read it every week.

Let me now be serious. Despite the absurdities, despite the repetition of those farcical events, there is change. Slowly, but surely, there are signs of positive change — even at the United Nations. I very much appreciate the statement of the Secretary-General, indicating that denying Israel's right to exist is anti-Semitism — pure and simple. That is important, because for too long the epicentre of global anti-semitism has been right here at the United Nations. And while it may take many years, I am absolutely confident that the revolution of Israel's ties with individual nations will ultimately be reflected here in this Hall of nations. I say that because there is also a marked change in the position of some of our key friends. Thanks to President Trump's unequivocal support for Israel in this organ, that positive change is gathering force. I thank President Trump for supporting Israel at the United Nations, and I thank Ambassador Nikki Haley for her support. I thank them for speaking the truth about Israel.

Here at the United Nations we must also speak the truth about Iran, as President Trump did so powerfully this morning (see A/72/PV.3). I served as Ambassador to the United Nations and I am a long-serving Israeli Prime Minister, so I have listened to countless speeches in this Hall. But I can say this — none were bolder, none were more courageous and forthright, than the one delivered by President Trump today. President Trump rightly called the nuclear deal with Iran "an embarrassment". I could not agree with that more. Here is why — Iran vows to destroy my country every day. That vow was repeated by its Chief of Staff the other day. Iran is conducting a campaign of conquest across the Middle East. And Iran is developing ballistic missiles to threaten the entire world.

Two years ago (see A/70/PV.22), I stood here and explained why the Iranian nuclear deal not only did not block Iran's path to the bomb, but actually paved it. That is because the restrictions placed on Iran's nuclear programme have what is called a "sunset clause". Let me explain what that term means. It means that in a few years those restrictions will be automatically removed, not by a change in Iran's behaviour, not by a lessening of its terror or its aggression, but merely by a change in the calendar. I warned that when that sunset came, a dark shadow would be cast over the entire Middle East and the world — because Iran would then be free to enrich uranium on an industrial scale, placing it on the threshold of a massive arsenal of nuclear weapons.

That is why I said two years ago that the greater danger was not that Iran would rush to a single bomb by breaking the deal, but that Iran would be able to build many bombs by keeping the deal. In the past few months we have all seen how dangerous even a few nuclear weapons can be in the hands of a small rogue regime. Imagine the danger of hundreds of nuclear weapons in the hands of a vast Iranian Islamist empire, with the missiles to deliver them anywhere on Earth. I know that there are those who still defend the dangerous deal with

Iran, arguing that it will block Iran's path to the bomb. That is exactly what they said about the nuclear deal with North Korea, and we all know how that turned out. Unfortunately, if nothing changes, this deal will turn out exactly the same way.

That is why Israel's policy regarding the nuclear deal with Iran is very simple — change it or cancel it, fix it or nix it. Nixing the deal means restoring massive pressure on Iran, including crippling sanctions, until Iran fully dismantles its nuclear-weapon capabilities. Fixing the deal requires many things, among them inspecting military sites and any other site that is suspect, and penalizing Iran for every violation. Above all, fixing the deal means getting rid of the sunset clause. Beyond fixing this bad deal, we must also stop Iran's development of ballistic missiles and roll back its growing aggression in the region.

I remember we have had these debates. As members know, I took a fairly active role in them. Many supporters of the deal naively believed that it would somehow moderate Iran and make it a "responsible" member of the international community. I strongly disagreed. I warned that, when the sanctions on Iran would be removed, Iran would behave like a hungry tiger unleashed — not joining the community of nations, but devouring nations one after the other. That is precisely what Iran is doing today. From the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, from Tehran to Tartus, an Iranian curtain is descending across the Middle East. Iran spreads that curtain of tyranny and terror over Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere. And it pledges to extinguish the light of Israel. Today I have a simple message for Ayatollah Khamenei, the dictator of Iran: the light of Israel will never be extinguished.

Those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril. Israel will defend itself with the full force of our arms and the full power of our convictions. We will act to prevent Iran from establishing permanent military bases in Syria for its air, sea and ground forces. We will act to prevent Iran from producing deadly weapons, in Syria or in Lebanon, for use against us. And we will act to prevent Iran from opening new terror fronts against Israel along our northern border. As long as Iran's regime seeks the destruction of Israel, Iran will face no fiercer enemy than Israel.

But I also have a message today for the people of Iran, who are not our enemy. They are our friends. One day my Iranian friends will be free from the evil regime that terrorizes them, hangs gays, jails journalists, tortures political prisoners and shoots innocent women like Neda Soltani, leaving her choking on her own blood on the streets of Tehran. I have not forgotten Neda, and I am sure that neither have members. When the day of liberation for the people of Iran finally comes, the friendship between our two ancient peoples will surely flourish once again.

Israel knows that we are not alone in confronting the Iranian regime. We stand shoulder to shoulder with those in the Arab world who share our hopes for a brighter future. We have made peace with Jordan and Egypt, whose courageous President, Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, I met here last night. I appreciate President Al Sisi's support for peace, and I hope to work closely with him and other leaders in the region to advance peace. Israel is committed to achieving peace with all of our Arab neighbours, including the Palestinians.

Yesterday President Trump and I discussed all of this at great length. I appreciate President Trump's leadership, his commitment to stand by Israel's side, his commitment to advance a peaceful future for all. Together, we can seize the opportunities for peace and together we can confront the great dangers of Iran. The remarkable alliance between the United States and Israel has never been stronger and never been deeper. Israel is deeply grateful for the support of the Trump Administration, the American Congress and the American people.

In this year of historic visits and historic anniversaries, Israel has much to be grateful for. A hundred and twenty years ago, Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress to transform our tragic past into a brilliant future by establishing the Jewish State. One hundred years ago, the Balfour Declaration advanced Herzl's vision by recognizing the right of the Jewish people to a national home in our ancestral homeland. Seventy years ago, the United Nations further advanced that vision by adopting resolution 181 (II), supporting the establishment of a Jewish State. Fifty years ago, we reunited our eternal capital — Jerusalem — achieving a miraculous victory against those who sought to destroy our State. Theodor Herzl was our modern Moses, and his dream has come true. We have returned to the promised land, revived our language, ingathered our exiles and built a modern, thriving democracy.

Tomorrow evening Jews around the world will celebrate Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of our new year. It is a time of reflection, and we look back with wonder at the remarkable and miraculous rebirth of our nation. We look ahead with pride to the remarkable contributions Israel will continue to make to all nations. A simple look around will reveal those contributions every day — in the food people eat, the water they drink, the medicines they take, the cars they drive, the cell phones they use and in so many other ways that are transforming our world. It can be seen in the smile of an African mother in a remote village who, thanks to an Israeli innovation, no longer must walk eight hours a day to bring water to her children. It can be seen in the eyes of an Arab child who has flown to Israel to undergo a lifesaving heart operation. And it can be seen in the faces of the people in earthquake-stricken Haiti and Nepal, who are rescued from the rubble and g new life by Israeli doctors.

As the prophet Isaiah said: "I have made you a unto the nations, to be My salvation to the ends o Earth." Today, 2,700 years after Isaiah spoke t prophetic words, Israel is becoming a rising p among the nations. And, at long last, its light is shi across the continents, bringing hope and salvatio the ends of the Earth. Happy new year from Israel

The Acting President: On behalf of the Ge Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister o State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister o State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.